

The FENINIST

ANL Mark II: How to beat fascism

The relaunch of the Anti-Nazi League is good, but it is only a beginning

THE initiative of the Socialist Workers Party in relaunching the Anti-Nazi League is a welcome move. No workers' organisation can remain complacent in the face of the rise of fascist or far right organisations across Europe in the aftermath of the defeat of bureaucratic socialism in Eastern Europe and what was the USSR. Germany, France, Austria, Italy, Switzerland and Belgium have all seen fascist and far right organisations gain a mass following.

In Britain, we are yet to see the rise of a fascist threat on the same scale, but there is still no room for complacency. The largest of the home grown fascist groups - the British National Party - plans to stand in 60 seats in the forthcoming general election, entitling it to at least one TV election broadcast. The success of its co-thinkers across Europe is bound to inspire it with some degree of confidence.

While its main constituency remains boneheads and social misfits of one sort or another, the BNP has had a number of successes recently in mobilising support from a white working class audience, particularly in parts of London. Activists in the workers' movement cannot remain indifferent to this. It is true that the main source of racial harassment for black people remains the British state itself. Yet, to refuse to organise against the fascists in the here and now, dubbing it a 'diversion', would be criminal. While we in the Communist Party believe that a mass fascist movement in Britain will have to have a very 'British' appearance, that does not mean that the Hitler worshiping lardheads of the BNP can be dismissed. Their racist attacks, thuggery and terrorism have to be dealt with. To do that a mass anti-fascist movement is needed.

Besides the ANL, two other organisations have put themselves forward.

First, the Anti-Racist Alliance. Launched last November on the initiative of the Black Liaison Group, Labour Party black sections and other black 'community' organisations. This campaign is a respectable, 'broad' (read 'Labourite') and predictably ineffective collection of 'worthies' ranging from Archbishop Trevor Huddleston, through the Wales Liberal Democrats to the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs and their Trotskyite hangers on. It is also sectarian and disruptive. ARA has been running a concerted slander campaign against the ANL. Not content with dismissing the ANL as "white" and doing everything it can to get people to withdraw their sponsorship, its leader, Marc Wadsworth, a professional Labourite black, claims he has been the subject of "physical attack" by SWP "organised thugs" (*Morning Star* January 20 1992). We treat such politics with the contempt it deserves.

The second organisation, Anti-Fascist Action, is a different matter. Afa has an honourable record of fighting

fascism, particularly in the East End of London. However, Afa exists, in effect, on the basis of the co-operation of what are self confessed small revolutionary organisations. We assume we would have few arguments, even from the most partisan of Afa comrades, that the mobilising potential of the ANL far outstrips that of this organisation.

The relaunch of the Anti-Nazi League therefore is a move that must be welcomed by all anti-fascists. In the 1970s, the ANL mobilised hundreds of thousands of people, particularly youth, against the poisonous ideas of the National Front. Given its history, given the relative strength of the SWP as the initiating organisation, the ANL alone of all the organisations currently in the field of anti-fascist work has the possibility of serving as the basis for the type of militant, working class anti-fascist organisation that we need.

But only the 'possibility'. Unless the SWP's admixture of popular frontism and economism is overcome, the new ANL will suffer from exactly the same type of problem that blunted the old ANL. Here we give a basic fighting platform for an anti-fascist/anti-racist movement in the conditions of today's Britain. This is the platform for which Communist Party members and supporters will agitate to ensure that the opportunity is not wasted to put the BNP scum where they belong, but also to ensure that our class takes a step forward in its capacity to fight the 'lair' of fascism, racism and reaction in contemporary society - the British bourgeois state.

1. Fascism is a product of capitalism itself. If fascism is a product of capitalism, and Britain is a capitalist country, then fascism must not be presented as essentially a 'foreign' or even distinctly 'German' phenomenon. Nazism was a particular form of fascism which grew in the soil of Germany in the 1920s and 30s. British fascism - when it arrives in a more dangerous form than the likes of the present day British National Party - will not goose step around the streets of Basildon, or give stiff arm salutes in shopping centres in Stoke Poges. It will adopt its own, distinctly British, forms, tapping into centuries of British ruling class chauvinism and even earlier indigenous traditions. A narrow focus on "the Nazis" not only allows people who actually support official British state racism off the hook, it can also potentially fuel the growth of anti-German chauvinism. The central enemy of any effective mass anti-fascist movement - as with the battle against unemployment, women's oppression, etc - is the capitalist state.

2. For physical confrontation with the fascists. The politics of the Communist Party are very far from the notion that you can simply beat fascism by introducing every BNP member to the pavement. Nevertheless, fascism will not be beaten unless we are prepared to use violence. Thus the new ANL must not

sacrifice militant confrontation with the fascists for the sake of their alliances with establishment figures or pop stars.

It is encouraging therefore that the ANL relaunch literature says that its model is the clash in South London's Lewisham in the summer of 1977. Then, as *Socialist Worker* says, "around 10,000 anti-racists broke through police lines and dispersed the fascists", and that, because of the ANL, "whenever the NF attempted to march [it] was met with a counter-demonstration" (*Socialist Worker* January 18 1992). Unfortunately this is not strictly true.

Back in September 1978 the National Front staged a march through the predominantly Bangladeshi area of Brick Lane, East London. Yet, instead of meeting them "with a counter-demonstration", the ANL told its supporters not to mobilise in defence of the Bangladeshi community but to attend its carnival over the other side of London. It was left to a few hundred non-SWP anti-fascists to oppose the National Front's East London provocation.

The SWP justified itself with the claim that confrontation would have meant the "disintegration of the ANL" (*Socialist Worker* September 30 1978). In reality what worried the SWP was the danger of success, not failure.

If the full strength of the ANL had been mobilised, there is every reason to believe that, as in Lewisham, police lines could have been broken and the fascists given a hiding not seen since the days of Cable Street in 1936, when the Communist Party and its supporters stopped Mosley and the black shirts. However, while this would have been a source of joy and celebration for revolutionaries and militants, it would not have gone down well with the ANL's 'respectable wing' of media celebrities, football managers and MPs. They would have withdrawn from the ANL *en masse*. That is what *Socialist Worker* meant by the danger of the ANL suffering "disintegration".

It was for the sake of respectability that the old ANL allowed the NF to march through Brick Lane. We say: never again!

3. No reliance on official state 'anti-racism'. Many of those who are named as initial sponsors of the new ANL are also at the same time enthusiastic supporters of the reforming capabilities of the capitalist state itself - Glenys Kinnock being a good example. Calls for the state that these types love so much to 'ban' racism, to 'prosecute' the fascists, to censor their literature, must be vigorously opposed.

Our own Communist Party has made this fundamental mistake in the past. In the 1930s, when we were the main opposition to Mosley and the British Union of Fascists, under the influence of opportunism our Party called on the state to "ban" Mosley's marches and rallies.

The state eventually responded, but

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then turned this self same weapon on the Communist Party itself. The Public Order Act was originally introduced, it was claimed, to curtail the activities of the BUF. It has been used in the overwhelming majority of cases against the left.

Delivering this type of weapon into the hands of our main enemy, the racist, chauvinist British state, is like turkeys praying for Christmas. Inevitably, these strengthened powers would be turned on us, the working class.

4. For democracy in the ANL. To be built as the type of mass, militant, anti-fascist organisation we need, the ANL must have democratic structures from top to bottom. The relaunched organisation must be led by those people who do the work, not by do-nothing, 'respectable' luminaries. They should not

be in the position of dictating the political line of the new ANL, either directly or through the fear that militant action would frighten them away.

The politics of the ANL should be decided by the membership of the ANL, expressed through regular policy conferences composed of delegates of local branches of the organisation and by a recallable leadership - picked, accountable to and trusted by the rank and file.

Communists will support all actions that are sincere in their efforts to fight the danger of fascism. But all the while, we will raise what is necessary for any such movement to be truly effective. It is in this spirit that we welcome the relaunch of the Anti-Nazi League and will work to build its actions.

Ian Mahoney

For more information/to join, contact: ANL, PO Box 2566, London N4 2HG. Affiliation fees: £1 individuals, £25 local groups and £50 national organisations. Cheques payable to 'Anti-Nazi League'.



1992 WILL be the year of the general election. It will also be the year of the European Community, culminating in the December EC leaders' summit in Edinburgh (presided over either by Major or Kinnock). This will herald the beginning of the real common market and needless to say there will be a great deal of media hoo-ha about peace and the coming age of plenty.

But behind moves towards a federal Europe is the growth of inter-imperialist antagonisms. With the waning of the "giant empire in the east" and its August 1991 counterrevolutionary collapse, these contradictions have moved centre stage of world politics. Through victory in the Cold War the US won a position of unprecedented power, yet there can be no hiding its relative decline.

The US represents stagnation. It is a brake on world capitalist accumulation and the world's greediest parasite. However, because of its continuing overwhelming military and political strength, the US can and is forcing other more dynamic imperialist centres to pay for its crisis, forcing them to make huge sacrifices in an attempt to offset its decline.

That, plus the related politics of a presidential contest, is what Bush's trip to Japan was all about. He wants the Japanese to buy US cars, trucks, electronic and other second rate commodities even though they do not want them. The same imperatives inform Bush's threats to the EC over agricultural protectionism.

This trade 'jaw-jaw' represents the first moves towards a World War III. 'Official communists' like the *Morning Star's* Tony Chater might believe that the traitor Gorbachev ushered in an epoch of peaceful co-existence; the bourgeoisie might believe that the threat of war only came entirely from the Soviet Union's determination to exist. History disagrees.

Any serious examination of this century's two world wars will show that capitalism is the source of war. As shown by the Gulf War, it has not changed its spots in the 1990s. Nor can it.

Capitalism's contradictions are prising the former anti-Soviet allies apart, and into rival antagonistic imperialist blocs. At the heart of this lies the EC question. Alone the countries of Western Europe are nothing, together they can "become the richest market in the world", and from this basis the US and the EC will undoubtedly compete as "super economic blocs" (US Chamber of Commerce report quoted in *Financial Times* January 2 1992).

Given all this, it would be pure folly to support the EC or present it as a vehicle for social change, as does Ken Livingstone and the 'ultra-revisionist' wing of Trotskyism. Neither is it any service to the working class to cast ourselves in the role of Little Britain King Canutes. Moves towards EC political and economic union do further undermine the Westminster road to socialism of Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner and old time left reformism. But that should not worry us. We have no interest in turning back the wheel of history, let alone preserving utopian left reformism.

It is equally wrong to dogmatically dismiss the economic and political convergence of the European imperialist powers on the basis of this or that biblical-type quote from Leon Trotsky. The evergreen tree of life tells us that "a United States of Europe is possible" (Lenin), and is happening before our eyes.

The locomotive driving on European unity is German imperialism. That is widely agreed. Germany did unite Europe between 1940 and 1945, of course. But the combined might of the Soviet Union, the US and the British empire proved too much. Things look set to be different this time round. Kohl's deutschmarks are more powerful than Hitler's "German sword".

Naturally, if the process of peaceful unification comes unstuck, force will again come onto the agenda. That, however, is a matter for the future. We must confront reality as it is unfolding today.

European capitalism demands the unity of European workers. This obviously includes trade union federations and actions. It also includes formulating cross-European social and political demands. Above all though, as we have argued in *The Leninist*, to the extent that the EC goes from a loose trading arrangement to a state, our task becomes one of organising for its revolutionary overthrow under the leadership of a Communist Party of the European Community.

Without committing anyone to anything, but with these aims and necessities in mind, the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB is calling a Workers' European Conference in December. The conference will be as broad as is needed. We will invite militants, communists and class struggle forces from across Europe, to share information and exchange views.

Meeting together in Edinburgh, the imperialists will be planning how they will divide and rob the post-Soviet world. We will be making alternative plans.

The Editor

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LETTERS

Durkin's dilemma

The *Morning Star's* letters page of January 8 carried the heading 'Criticism and self-criticism'. Those *Star* readers who are taken in by such pseudo-communist posing are being duped.

Despite his avowed love for "democratic socialism", *Star* editor Tony Chater is continuing the tradition of 'official communist' bureaucratic stifling of dissident views, not Lenin's principle of open (printed) discussion.

The word is about (but not in the *Star*) that a third of the membership of the *Star's* Communist Party of Britain has resigned because CPB national committee member Tom Durkin (among others) cannot get his views on the "alleged crimes and alleged abuses of democracy" under Stalin published in the *Star*.

Truly the *Morning Star* is not the paper of the CPB, but the CPB is the 'party' of the *Morning Star*, which Chater treats as his personal property.

The CPB is a prisoner of Chater's *Star*. It can never make a real Communist Party. Comrade Durkin is welcome, if he dares, to use the columns of *The Leninist* to air his views.

Stan Owen
London

Impressed

I was a member of the CPGB (now the Democratic Left) since the mid-80s and was really distressed at what happened with this, and of course, the recent events in Eastern Europe, and the general anti-communist feeling that has evolved - and the gloating from the west.

I was really impressed and encouraged by the literature you sent and I look forward to receiving *The Leninist* and the books.

Nick Davis
Kent

Loot

I wrote to Mel Danvers, secretary of the Kent District of the old Euro CPGB, saying I presumed there would be a meeting very soon of the District Committee concerning the funds. These funds are about the £40,000 plus mark, mainly resulting from the sale of premises. I proposed some time ago that it should be handed over to the genuine Communist Party - that led by the Provisional Central Committee.

My letter to Danvers recalled this proposition, and on December 21 I received a reply:

"Dear Reg: - I'm afraid you presume wrongly. Now that national congress has decided to change the constitution the Kent DC no longer exists and the district itself is dissolved.

"Contrary to your assertions, the legitimate successor to the CPGB is Democratic Left and not CPGB PCC and Co Ltd. Congress itself has determined this and not some unrepresentative band of juvenile [sic] ultra leftists (see Lenin: 'Left Wing' communism: an infantile disorder')."

Reg Weston
Kent

Vanguard

I read with considerable interest your article in *The Leninist* No 112 by Mike Smith, 'The vanguard party in Ireland in search of a lead'. I note, first of all, that you describe Mike as a "former" editor of *The Irish Marxist*. Given its brief existence to date, I hope that this does not mean that *TIM* has ceased to

exist. If so, it speaks volumes for the difficulties in building a Leninist Party in Ireland.

In the article, Mike fails to acknowledge the existence of the CPI(ML), just as *The Leninist* treats the RCPB(ML). Unless they are seen in a sectarian fashion, as an unmentionable challenge, if you regard them as irrelevant, Mike, a brief mention is all that political honesty requires.

Andy McCabe
Co Down

Irish communist

I am an Irish communist trying to do my bit to participate in the struggles in our country. I welcome the article by comrade Mike Smith in *The Leninist* No 112 and the fact that it raises the importance of building a genuine Communist Party. But it tells us what to do in a way which, in my opinion is inappropriate for a fraternal party. The Irish communist movement, like the communist movement in many of the British former colonies, has over and again suffered from an inappropriate relation with the British communist movement.

I differentiate totally from the necessity to have close ties between fraternal parties, from the necessity to criticise and discuss fully one another's programmes and views. The correct stand is to support the communist movement at this stage, supporting and encouraging all trends that could contribute to such a party.

The article does not mention, let alone encourage, certain activities that are going on to propagate Marxism-Leninism and try to establish a new party. It does not mention the *Irish Marxist* group that produces the paper that the writer used to edit, and it doesn't deal with the CPI(ML).

One mistake of the article is to imply that all that communists have to resolve is their attitude to the national question and the current armed struggle; to lead this and everything will fall into place. The orientation of the article is to deal almost exclusively with this one issue. When communists organise according to basic principles, they organise everywhere the people are.

It is time to stop dismissing other left wing and progressive people simply because they don't agree with you. We should be saying exactly where they are wrong and right, but we should be encouraging cooperation in any progressive activity, to develop contacts, discussion and unity of the progressive forces.

The article skips over the weaknesses of the republicans and uses the weakness of other left groups to say they are reactionary. Communists should criticise in detail the weaknesses of the republicans as well. It makes another mistake: The IRA could bring about national liberation. Communists in Ireland should be encouraging the IRA/SF to adopt a consistent revolutionary bourgeois position. A modification of tactics and programme by the IRA could free and unite the country.

Gerry Booth
Co Down

Mike Smith replies:

I am concerned that comrade Booth can take such an isolationist attitude to what is our proletarian internationalist perspective. It is precisely because the content of self determination in Ireland is the class struggle that we must exercise our duty to advise the working class in Ireland. Of course, at the end of the day it is communists in Ireland who will decide the issues that face the Communist Party of Ireland, they will also at some point have to decide whether they are part of the world communist movement.

Criticism that the article does not deal with this group or that, could be

assuaged through a more extensive publication. But it did, we feel, deal with the major trends as they present themselves to the working class.

On the attitude of communists to the republican movement, it is a fallacy to imagine that the republicans can be encouraged to change their programme without communists fighting for leadership of the national struggle. For communists to then enter this struggle to the extent of only reforming their bourgeois democratic programme is to desert the communist cause.

UWC

Single issue campaigns such as UWC, AFA and HOI can have great success in drawing people to Communist politics. This must be the ultimate aim! It is with this in mind that I write to complain about the current issue of Unemployed Organiser:

1) Ernie Roberts, distinguished bourgeois bureaucrat, takes up the whole front page with an open letter calling for a Labour victory. *The Leninist* has consistently argued that the Labour Party is thoroughly reactionary, yet now a journal funded by CPGB comrades is used to support Labour. Comrades selling *The Leninist* can not be expected to then go and sell *UO* which contradicts their whole political argument. By calling for a Labour victory the UWC is sowing workers' illusions in capitalism's respectable face.

2) Nowhere in *UO* is the CPGB mentioned. We must never be ashamed of our name.

3) The revolutionary left will now see our stand against opportunism as hypocrisy. We run the risk of becoming laughing stocks if we say one thing to our close comrades then tell the masses the complete opposite thing.

Once upon a time a certain organisation began to change their politics so they became a little 'softer' because they thought this would make them more popular. Then they decided to change their name for the same reason. Well comrades, let's not go down the same road.

I urge that this issue of *UO* is collected in by the PCC, before any more damage is done. Then we must reprint, not with bourgeois bureaucrats on our front page but with a member of our PCC on the front.

Martin Knight
Surrey

Mark Fischer replies:

The Unemployed Workers Charter is neither a pro nor an anti Labour Party campaign. It raises the basic minimum demands that are necessary for unemployed workers to live decently in today's Britain. Anyone in the workers' movement who can support these demands should join us, whatever their party affiliations. The call issued by our Honorary President contains a single line that he personally "and many others" will be working for a Labour victory. Comrade Linton's suggestion that it constitutes the substance of Ernie's piece is simply rubbish.

Ernie reconciles his support for the demands of the UWC with support for Labour. As a communist, I see huge contradictions in this for him. As a UWCer, I know that who Ernie votes for in the next election is a secondary question. Raising objections to this Ernie Roberts article is crude leftism.

Note: Letters have been shortened due to lack of space. For reasons of political security we have changed certain names, addresses and details.

To reply to letters, raise questions or comment on articles in *The Leninist*,
WRITE to The Editor,
BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX,
PHONE us on 071-431 3135 or
FAX us on 081-459 5905.

Meeting the Challenge

The air is thick with talk of an April general election. Communists are getting themselves ready for the fight



Communists take the offensive against capitalism

A A meeting in central London on January 5, comrade John Bridge launched the £70,000 CPGB election fund. This general 'Party Offensive' will subsume our organisation's usual intense campaign of fund-raising, the two month Summer Offensive. By the end of this month, we need £10,000 in and by the end of February a further £5,000. This may not sound like a lot. After all, if we are to hit our £70,000 target we need an average monthly total of £10,000 in order to simply 'break even'.

Our organisation needs to have £15,000 in hand over and above its normal budgeting by the end of February to cover immediate costs incurred from our ambitious programme of work for 1992. Yet a feature of every single fund-raising drive we have ever launched in the past is the fact that they start slowly.

We cannot afford such a 'laid back' approach to the first months of this campaign. The target that we have set for the Party for the end of February of this year is a vital one if our organisation is not to curtail its activities, to be crippled politically by debts.

This we must never allow to happen. Historically our organisation's approach to fundraising is organically linked to each major political step forward we have ever taken.

Whether it has been the fight to increase the frequency and range of our publications, campaigns for new technical equipment vital to the work of the Party, or spreading our work and organisation outside London, the annual Offensives of the Party have had a sharply honed political edge. This has never been more true than for the Party Offensive, 1992.

1992 can potentially be a vital year in our fight to reforge the Communist Party of Great Britain which our class so desperately needs. We plan actions on unemployment, on Ireland, an international conference around the question of Europe, as well as the general election campaign. All of these - but centrally the general election campaign and our European initiative - will stretch our organisation. But at the same time they can be important milestones in our fight to rebuild a genuine Communist Party.

We are not just out to construct an ideologically correct trend. We need a genuine Communist Party which can lead the mass of the workers because it has organic roots in the working class itself. That is why our organisa-

tion puts the question of the Communist Party at the centre of its work. Although we call ourselves the Communist Party of Great Britain, we recognise that the Communist Party in the full sense has yet to be built.

The current period is one of reaction which will affect the workers' movement world wide. We repeatedly warned that the opportunism of official communism held counterrevolutionary dangers. But it gives us no pleasure to be proved right, because we do not expect that the reaction will only affect the remnants of 'official communism'.

What we do expect in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union are similar splits and schisms to affect all sorts of organisations on the left. Militant, the Socialist Workers Party and the Revolutionary Communist Party have all distanced themselves from the Soviet Union to one degree or another; nevertheless, they and others will have problems.

This is a dangerous period for all communist organisations. What is needed in this period in our communist organisation must be unity. Not the opportunist unity of the bureaucrat and the lowest common denominator, but genuine disciplined communist unity brought about through ideological agreement, through the thrashing out of wrong ideas, and the united fight to translate our theory into practice. We will discipline our entire organisation on the basis of unity in action. That is why we have a chance to survive, prosper and grow in this period, and why the opportunists are doomed.

Thus, given the nature of this period and the tasks it poses to us, our general election campaign should not be conducted for votes, to save our deposits, or even because of those workers the campaign may attract to communism - that is secondary. What we are fighting

for in these difficult conditions is to bring the *idea* of the Communist Party to the attention of advanced workers.

Our campaigns in the constituencies will not simply be conducted as local campaigns, but as a national campaign in front of the entire working class of Great Britain. Four candidates, to include Scotland and Wales, is the absolute minimum necessary for this campaign to be at all serious in its stated goals.

The extent to which the campaign is made real, however, is a question of finances. The campaign must be professional, dynamic, serious, imaginative and genuine. We therefore cannot afford to be restricted by money. Again, fundraising presents itself as one of the most urgent and fundamental of political tasks our organisation sets itself.

To show the scale of campaign we are talking about, let us look at the general election. The absolute minimum amount of work, before we do anything, will cost us £20,000. To mount a campaign which will be worthy of the politics we wish to put over will cost us between £30,000 and £40,000.

Given the certainty of an election, given our day to day expenditure, given all our other campaigning activities, but above all with the perspective of fighting a serious general election campaign which will include the relaunch of a working class daily newspaper, we have decided to launch a £70,000 general election fund. This is a tremendous target for our organisation to achieve.

In the past our organisation has performed financial miracles. Around us we do not have any millionaires or half millionaires, we don't even have any friendly rich people. But in 1991 we were capable of raising £30,000 in the 8th Summer Offensive. That outstripped organisations claiming membership numbers with several zero's beyond ours: serious money in anybody's book on the left.

But now we need more. We have not plucked the figure of £70,000 out of a hat, we are putting forward such an ambitious target because it is necessary. It is necessary to raise that money for our general election campaign, to survive up to it, and to flourish and come out strengthened from it.

As comrade John Bridge put it in our January 5 meeting: "We need cash from our members, supporters and readers if communism is going to fulfil its political tasks in Britain in 1992. 1992 is going to be an exciting year for our organisation. A year which is fraught with dangers, but a year in which, because of contradictory conditions, our organisation can start to provide some of the answers the working class movement needs."

Rally, comrades! Rush your pledges, donations and offers of help in as quickly as possible! Victory to the 9th Party Offensive of the CPGB!

Alec Long

Party Offensive facts and figures

At the January 5 meeting, comrades pledged over £9,500 by February 29.

- This was an average of £448 per comrade.
- The highest participant is pledging £1,000.
- The lowest pledge, from a first timer in Party Offensives, is £100.
- Unemployed and student comrades accounted for well over half this initial total, averaging £377 each.

A special meeting on Sunday March 1, we will survey the results of the Offensive and also our work in the general election, and will take a fresh round of pledges for the remainder of the Offensive. Send your donation or pledge in now!

IN STRUGGLE

On January 15 Gravesend magistrates court rejected the council's demand to issue 1,300 liability orders on the obscure point that the 1968 Evidence Act does not apply to civil cases - meaning their computer evidence is inadmissible in poll tax cases. This ruling, which could affect the 5 million poll tax cases dealt with since April 1990, has now been confirmed by the Clerkenwell stipendiary magistrate's judgement against Camden's Labour council. Whether Heseltine will attempt to rush through a change in the law, we cannot say. But clearly the government's poll tax crisis continues to deepen. Presently the anti-poll tax campaign exists on the basis of the sullen resistance of large numbers of working class people and the residues of the Anti-Poll Tax Unions. Yet in spite of this there can be no denying that there continues to be popular victories, and as Strathclyde proves, not only in the courts. There is a view in left wing circles that the poll tax is politically dead, yet it remains an issue that affects all members of the working class and unites them in opposition to the state. The present situation calls for a coordinated political campaign to finish off the tax and expose the underlying weakness of the state. The SWP and Militant should revive their activities, and the anarchist groups should swallow their anger at Militant and cooperate. A national bulletin is required to keep the activists in touch with one another and make anti-poll tax activities more effective. PR

Vigorous campaigning to build Hands off Ireland's Easter Rising commemoration march and rally on Sunday April 18 began last weekend, when HOI's contingent on the 2,000 strong Bloody Sunday march through London was noticeably the most militant and disciplined. Twenty years ago, 14 unarmed demonstrators were shot dead in Derry by British paratroopers while protesting against internment without trial. In the years since we have seen British imperialism perpetrate numerous similar outrages against the republican communities of the Six Counties. While the IRA acts to defend these communities, it also takes the struggle onto the offensive, to the British state. We defend this. Actions like the bombing of Whitehall and workers from security installations will provoke the wrath of the British establishment. But the unconditional support anti-imperialists in Britain should give the liberation

Connolly's Irish Citizen Army before Easter 1916

movement in Ireland must not waver. It must be given concrete form, through building a genuine Irish solidarity movement that wins the working class in Britain to the side of those struggling for Irish freedom. Hands Off Ireland! is committed to this goal. We do not just call for British withdrawal from Ireland. We want to see British imperialism beaten and forced to retreat. NC

On January 8 British Steel announced the closure of the Ravenscraig steelmaking complex in Motherwell by the end of September - two years earlier than previously threatened. This means the direct loss of 1,200 jobs, and with the knock-on effect on dependent jobs in the area, possibly as many as 16,000 workers will join the dole queue. The Scottish secretary's statement that the shut-down was "hugely disappointing" is an insult to the entire working class, and it is clear that Labour will do nothing to lead a fightback. Labour's trade and industry spokesman Gordon Brown summed up his party's programme of inaction by saying they would talk to British Steel! The CPGB has a very different approach. As Tam Dean Burn, our prospective parliamentary candidate for Glasgow Central declared: "The working class must go into action now to stop this disaster happening. This move to closure can be stopped in its tracks if we learn lessons fast. We have to fight for what we need, not what the bosses say they can afford. Everyone angry about this attack on the working class should join the national demonstration against unemployment in London on Saturday February 29". NC

A good press



Over the last couple of months the CPGB Provisional Central Committee has received wide and almost friendly coverage in the bosses' media (including BBC2's 'Around Westminster' and Channel 4's 'Ring my bell'). We have provided a perverse angle to their stories about the 'end' of communism. We know however, that 'objective' coverage will give way to hate mongering and red baiting. Soon we will face a drive to force down wages and smash workers' resistance, accompanied by torrents of anti-communist hysteria aimed at steering workers clear of Marxism-Leninism. That is why, however 'generous' at the moment, bourgeois media coverage is no substitute for our own independent communist press. To sustain publication of *The Leninist* we rely on our own strengths, especially the financial sacrifices of our supporters. December's fund reached £791, but the January total of £232 is still well short of the £600 target. Special thanks to NM in Newport for £50 and QM in Canada for £20. Vernon Douglas, Fund Organiser

South Africa: revolution or counterrevolution!

In December the South African Communist Party held its 8th Congress, the first legal congress inside the country for 40 years

ON THE surface the 8th Congress of the South African Communist Party, held in December 1991, would seem to be a resounding success. This was its first legal congress in 40 years. Membership had risen to 25,000 and is still increasing. Members of the SACP occupy leading positions in the ANC and trade union movement and the Party is held in deep respect and love by a substantial section of the masses. Surely, in a world where we have seen one defeat after another, South Africa and the SACP represent a shaft of sunlight?

Certainly Chris Hani, newly elected general secretary of the SACP, is full of confidence. He told the fraternal visitor from the New Communist Party that "the success of the congress exceeded all our expectations" (*The New Worker* December 14 1991). This view was confirmed by Mike Hicks, part time general secretary of the Communist Party of Britain and another British 'official communist' guest. According to him, in South Africa there is "a Communist Party alive with members and a leadership united around the tasks and plan of action that lay ahead" (*Morning Star* January 9 1991). Ian McKay, the third British fraternal, this time from the Democratic Left, confirms it: the debates at the SACP's 8th Congress provided "a new, youthful, revitalised character to this party which is emerging from illegality, and which remains deeply involved in day to day struggle" (*New Times* December 14 1991).

Such unanimity among 'official communists' should immediately set Marxist-Leninist alarm bells ringing in the minds of all genuine communists (it reminds us of the unanimous chorus of approval that greeted Gorbachev's perestroika 'reforms'). For the SACP to receive the *united* praise of the part time reformists of the CPB, the centrist zombies of the New Communist Party and the petty bourgeois Democratic Left might seem strange. Yet if we pierce the 'militant' surface of the SACP's 8th Congress we can see why it earned the praise of all three varieties of British 'official communist' opportunism.

Let us not be mealy-mouthed. The leadership of the SACP is *directly* betraying the interests of the South African revolution: it is acting as a conservative, restraining influence on the black masses and is channelling their revolutionary anger and energy into the dead end of reformism. The very organisation which ought to be acting as a vanguard force in society, bringing revolutionary socialist consciousness to the masses and leading them into revolution is, monstrously, doing the very opposite. For the SACP, and its ally the ANC, the oppressed black masses are rapidly just becoming a stage army which is wheeled on when required to give a push to the imperialist backed 'peace negotiations' - a reactionary charade if ever there was one.

A close scrutiny of the SACP clearly reveals that it is suffering from the same opportunist cancer that brought down the 18 million strong CPSU and eventually the entire Soviet Union. The disease is by no means as advanced, but it is there nevertheless and spreading rapidly throughout the whole body.

Last year we warned that "Slovo is not paying lip service to the prevailing rightist wind coming from Moscow while actually carrying out a revolution in practice. Slovo and the SACP are rapidly shifting from left centrism to right centrism. No one in its leadership now talks about uninterrupted revolution and insurrection" (*The Leninist* No106, July 13 1991).

Unfortunately, nothing has happened since to disprove our words. Indeed, the SACP has continued its drift. The counterrevolution in the now defunct Soviet Union has shifted the leadership of the SACP even further to the right and it is well on the road to social democracy, albeit at the moment on the extreme left of social democracy, given its formal commitment to Marxism-Leninism.

The counterrevolutionary collapse of bureaucratic

socialism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, plus the subsequent implosion of 'official communism' throughout the globe, has created conditions which are the very reverse of what happened in the mid-1970s, when the tide began to turn against apartheid. The defeat of Portuguese colonialism in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau by revolutionary national liberation movements (supported by the Soviet Union) provided inspiration for the youth of 1976. Unsurprisingly, MPLA and Frelimo slogans, usually couched in Marxist or communistic terms, appeared on the walls of Soweto and other townships. For the first time, to the radicalised black youth, the almost monolithic structures of the apartheid state seemed vulnerable.

The only 'example' for the black youth and revolutionaries now is the ignoble collapse of bureaucratic socialism and right wing capitalist triumphalism. The ideology of Marxism-Leninism and socialism is ridiculed the whole world over. To believe in radical social change, let alone communism, is to go against the grain.

Given these bleak times it is the task of revolutionaries to consciously stand against the stream. Only a party anchored in revolutionary Marxist-Leninist theory and thoroughly imbued with a scientific socialist outlook can avoid being swept away by the anti-communist tidal wave.

Obviously the SACP, as it is currently led, is *not* that party. The leadership's centrist waverings are being transmogrified into a headlong rush towards Eurocommunism with a South African face.

This is the *essence* of the SACP congress. Joe Slovo, retiring general secretary, wanted the congress to orientate itself towards social democracy. For those with eyes to see, this is undeniable. Also incontestable is the unpleasant fact that his successor, Chris Hani, does not represent a break from this logic.

If we examine the SACP, all its documents and the public statements of its leading figures, we can see that its overall politics are rapidly developing into a marriage of classic 'official communist' centrism with anti-communist Eurocommunism (a veritable Frankenstein's monster of a party).

Slovo

There is a mountain of evidence against Slovo. His interview with the *Morning Star* (a peculiar sort of 'interview' in that nobody asked him any questions, but that is the polemic-scared *Morning Star* for you) on the eve of the SACP Congress is littered with the dismally familiar phraseology and 'official optimism' so beloved of centrists the whole world over.

In classic reformist fashion Slovo obviously believes that it is possible for the black working class to act as sort of mass entryists into the apartheid state, to gradually take it over and push it on to a socialist path without stepping on too many capitalist toes. The idea of smashing the apartheid state is, for a renegade like Slovo, quixotic, and the stuff of mad revolutionaries, who supposedly have a strange 'psychological' desire to re-enact the storming of the Winter Palace.

Slovo informed the *Morning Star*, and this must have warmed the hearts of reformists everywhere, that "we give notice that we, as an independent party of socialism, will exert every political effort to orientate this mixed economy in a socialist direction" (December 7 1991).

What pompous windbag! Slovo has obviously taken his cue from the CPB's *British Road to Socialism*, with the word 'Britain' deleted and the words 'South Africa' inserted. After all, comrade Slovo, it has worked so well in Britain you might as well give it a bash in South Africa...

Slovo's analysis of the August counterrevolution shows objectively that he is being pulled in an overtly anti-communist direction. His capitulation to anti-

communism is, of course, disguised in the garb of 'anti-Stalinism', 'anti-dogmatism', 'ruthlessly criticising the past', etc (sounds familiar?).

For Slovo the August counterrevolution had absolutely nothing to do with Gorbachev's policies of perestroika and glasnost (not surprising really, since Slovo uncritically tail-ended the Gorbachevites when they were in power) but all to do with the man Gorbachev, his individual psychology and lack of 'vision': "It is saddening that some of those in the Soviet Union who helped to diagnose the disease have now allowed themselves to be pushed into a treatment which addresses the disease by killing the patient ... Gorbachev has completely lost his way" (*Morning Star* December 7 1991).

What nonsense. The Gorbachevites did not 'diagnose the disease' but criticised certain aspects of 'official communism' (or, as they opportunistically decided to call it, 'Stalinism') from a counterrevolutionary perspective, as part of a transparent cover to introduce market forces and eventually restore capitalism.

We have long since commented on how Slovo's 'critique' of 'Stalinism' and the ensuing formulations, such as his Kautskyite rejection of the term 'dictatorship of the proletariat', served the purpose not only of distancing himself from bureaucratic socialism as practised in the Soviet Union, but also from the aim of socialism itself.

Correctly, we denounced Slovo for his stomach churning revisionism and betrayal of socialism: "For all his 'courageous' sweeping criticisms of Stalin's errors and crimes, he is being swept along in the wake of the even bigger *present* errors and crimes of Gorbachev. Where Stalin bureaucratically defended the USSR, Gorbachev is bureaucratically moving towards capitalist restoration" (*The Leninist* No106, July 13 1991).

In a very revealing convergence of views both the *Sunday Telegraph* and the *Morning Star* (and it is *not* because the *Sunday Telegraph* has swung to the left) approvingly quote Slovo's statement that "we accept that the market is an effective watchdog over economic efficiency and viability and that its absence in socialist countries led to their ruination" (*Sunday Telegraph* December 8 1991). 'Universal' praise again! We can only presume from this that Slovo criticises Gorbachev from a Yeltsinite angle, ie he did not introduce capitalism fast enough.

Characteristically, however, the *Sunday Telegraph* was more perceptive and honest in its appraisal than the *Morning Star*, in that it commented on the obvious fact that "Slovo painted a revisionist Marxist vision of a multi-party state with regular, open and free elections" and it made the logical conclusion that the SACP "is plagued by ideological uncertainty" (*Ibid*).

Predictably, no uncertainty or doubt every be-fuddles the minds of our 'broad labour movement' *Morning Star*. If you look at the political world through the permanently rose-tinted glasses of the *Morning Star*, Slovo's enthusiastic endorsement of the market is interpreted as making the future safe for socialism: "The future is socialism" its headline boldly declares (*Morning Star* January 9 1991).

Of course, those with long memories (a gift not possessed by opportunists, who appear to have the retentive power of a retarded hamster) will recall the CPB solemnly proclaiming in its 'updated' *British Road to Socialism*, published in 1990, that the world balance of forces, believe it or not comrades, had tilted in favour of socialism! The CPB leadership has reversed the Cassandra myth; its false prophecies are believed by the membership as expressed in congress.

That Slovo's Kautskyite belief in a benevolent imperialism has not been altered one iota by the August counterrevolution and the Gulf War slaughter is surely astonishing - that is to anybody who does not understand the political 'psyche' of a right moving centrist. To a centrist, the imperialist carnage in the Gulf only confirms the impossibility of social-

ist revolution and the burning necessity for peaceful reform. We can see this in the SACP leadership, as they try to force the square peg of revisionist dogma into the circle of living reality.

The SACP's *Manifesto* (passed by congress), in the section on 'new political realities', contains the following Kautskyite gem: "Internationally the deep crisis, in fact, the virtual end of the world socialist system has had, and will continue to have, a negative impact on our own struggle. The imperialist bloc is, as we have noted, now more powerful, confident and aggressive. On the other hand (partly linked to the end of the old, two bloc, Cold War system) there is now a worldwide tendency to settle regional conflict through negotiations and to make relatively peaceful transitions towards greater democracy in formerly anti-democratic countries."

What pitiful idiocy. This is a clear example of political schizophrenia, as the above statement could have been written by two completely different people. It is the ABC of Marxism-Leninism (*à la Clausewitz*) that an imperialist peace is just a continuation of imperialist war by other non-violent means. To be more specific, peace under imperialism is just an *interregnum*, a preparation for the next war. This basic fact seems to have eluded the 'Marxists' who penned this.

As we have pointed out consistently, the Gorbachevites and ex-Gorbachevites treated revolutionary situations as so many pieces of political real estate, to be sold off according to how their negotiations with the western imperialists were going, in order to earn the praise of the bourgeoisie and its media. This was described as bringing 'peace' to 'hot spots' (predictably, all manner of 'official communist' rags, like the *Morning Star*, enthusiastically supported these imperialist stich-ups, usually in the name of 'humanity'). Naturally, the revolutionary situation in South Africa was just another embarrassing 'hot spot' to the Gorbachevites, along with Afghanistan, Kampuchea and Palestine, to be sold off in their craving for respectability.

The counterrevolution in the ex-Soviet Union has made the imperialists' job far easier. They no longer have to make any sort of concessions, no matter how limited or tokenistic, to the Soviet Union. They can impose conditions on 'hot spots'. Thus South Africa is in mortal danger of going the same way as Afghanistan and Kampuchea (and possibly El Salvador), the revolutionary situation negotiated into temporary extinction.

The 'anti-dogmatic' leadership of the SACP will have none of this. It believes that there is an unprecedented opportunity to replace apartheid and create the conditions for a 'peaceful transition to socialism'. Those whom the gods wish to destroy...

Of course, the congress was not a one way affair. There was resistance, there were positive features. For instance, the congress voted against Slovo and decided to maintain its commitment to the term 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. In itself this is good. But what does it amount to in reality?

To be frank, precious little. The opposition to the Eurocommunistic leadership assumes a *centrist* form. A comparison can be made with the 'official' opposition within the old 'official' CPGB. This opposition was purely centrist and could never mount any effective resistance. Indeed, the centrist opposition itself contained its own liquidationist logic, as it shared the same political programme as the Euros, ie automatically voting for the *bourgeois* Labour Party.

Also analogous to the SACP, the centrists (primarily the Straight Leftists and what became the New Communist Party) made a great public virtue of their commitment to 'proletarian internationalism' and the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', but these were just mechanistic slogans whipped up to cover their own centrism. In reality 'proletarian internationalism' meant 'diplomatic internationalism', that is a sycophantic tail-ending of the then socialist countries. The

'dictatorship of the proletariat' meant to them 'extra-parliamentary action' to 'pressurise' a Labour government ever leftwards. What is needed in the SACP is Leninism, not centrist factionism.

Despite centrist amendment, the *Manifesto* approved by the SACP's 8th Congress is transparently reformist. The whole document is infused with a 'stagist' theory of 'revolution'. First, there is a 'national democratic revolution', or 'majority rule'; then, after a long time, the struggle for socialism.

The section 'the way forward' in the *Manifesto* contains this artificial stagism in its purist form. It is worth quoting two particular passages in full, to give the full revisionist essence of the whole:

"For the SACP the national democratic revolution is not a delaying tactic or a side-track from our longer term socialist objectives. In the first place, real national democratic change will represent a major victory for the people of our country, and above all for the working class.

"Secondly, in the concrete conditions of our conditions, national democratic transformation holds out the prospect for the most rapid and direct advance to socialism. A thorough-going process of national democratic change, and the broad range of popular forces that are and must continue to be mobilised behind this objective, constitute a major weapon in the struggle to loosen the stranglehold that the capitalist class exerts over our country's destiny" (p8).

What miserable reformist drivel. The concept of socialist revolution is conspicuous by its absence. No mention is made of workers' control or soviets, just passing references to "anti-monopoly legislation", the "radical readjustment" of ownership, occupation of land, and so on. In other words, a non-exploitative capitalism.

Menshevism

It is depressingly obvious that the SACP is attempting to foist an artificial bourgeois democratic stage on a living revolutionary process, to lead it down a reformist cul-de-sac. Instead of talking about the burning necessity of revolution, which leads uninterrupted to the dictatorship of the proletariat, the SACP is preaching the virtues of bourgeois democracy. The SACP leadership is trying to drag the black working class backwards, not unleash its pent up revolutionary energy.

This is classic Menshevism. The Mensheviks argued that it was sheer adventurism to talk of making a socialist revolution in Russia, because it was too backward. The working class was too small and uneducated, the peasantry too large and ignorant. The productive forces were not 'ready' for socialism, claimed the Mensheviks. It was the task of 'revolutionaries' to usher in a bourgeois democratic (ie capitalist) regime, which would gradually raise the productive forces and 'educate' the growing proletariat. Sometime in the non-specified future this capitalism would prepare the conditions for 'socialism'.

This hopelessly mechanistic fantasy was shattered by the living reality of the October Revolution, led by the Bolshevik Party, under the guidance of the 'mad adventurer' VI Lenin. It was the genius of Lenin to understand the need for an uninterrupted revolution which would immediately proceed from bourgeois to socialist tasks. It was the historic role of the proletariat in Russia to act as a 'surrogate' bourgeoisie and perform all the tasks allocated to them by history. Lenin was right and the Mensheviks were wrong.

For the SACP to transfer this reactionary Menshevik fantasy to South Africa would be enough to provoke instant hilarity in any genuine communist, if the implications were not so dangerous. The SACP is playing with counterrevolutionary fire. It is not some insignificant organisation with little or no base in the working class; where it points, millions will follow. The SACP has a heroic history. It was in the vanguard of the struggle against apartheid and thousands of its members have made heroic self-sacrifices (quite often the *ultimate* self-sacrifice).

However, we communists are not sentimentalists; a Communist Party must be judged on its present, not only its past. Even if Joe Slovo and Chris Hani do sincerely believe in 'Marxism-Leninism' in their heart of hearts, it is of no decisive concern or interest. Communists evaluate people by the objective role they play in the class struggle, not by their subjective good intentions.

Inevitably, as the SACP leadership distances itself from actually extinct socialism, its target of criticism moves further back, in order to accommodate the bourgeoisie. In its *Draft Manifesto*, presumably penned by Slovo himself, we find what can only be a condemnation of the October Revolution, by implication (*Umsiwebenzi* September 1991). It warns of "premature attempts by a Marxist vanguard to build socialism in countries where the social base for such a transformation has been seriously lacking". Those foolish Bolsheviks, those wise Mensheviks!

Not surprisingly, this proved too much for the congress and this passage was deleted. Yet the amended passage says more or less the same thing,

only dressed up in 'left' clothing: the crisis "has been sharpened by the difficulties of trying to build socialism from an underdeveloped economic base. On occasions subjective errors by the revolutionary forces contributed to these difficulties". What 'subjective errors' are you referring to exactly?

It cannot be stressed too much that this is not a matter of abstract theory, the sole concern of 'dogmatists' - contrary to the 'wisdom' of Joe Slovo, who said back in 1988 that "the prospect of proceeding at once to socialist solutions is inevitable only in the abstract sense" (quoted in *International Socialism* No51, summer 1991, p107).

The whole fate of the South African revolution rests on this fundamentally basic point: is the working class going to seize power or not? There is no middle road. As we have already established, the SACP leadership is gearing itself up for a 'historic' compromise with the ruling class, and is prepared to leave capitalism intact.

Like the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries before them in Russia, the SACP clearly believes that the working class must work in alliance with the 'liberal' wing of the bourgeoisie, avoid all talk of revolution and work towards 'democratic' capitalism. This may sound to some like an 'ultra-leftist' slander against the SACP, but it is the truth. Chris Hani said in a speech, much to the delight of the reactionary South African press, that the Transkei Defence Force - trained and equipped by the SADF - was an ally in the freedom struggle! What sort of talk is this from a 'communist'? Neither the armed wing of the apartheid state nor its allies can be converted into a force for liberation; the bourgeois state in all its forms must be shattered, destroyed, smashed.

Revolutionary situation

South Africa was plunged into a revolutionary situation with the events of Soweto 1976. This revolutionary situation has proved to be exceptional in its protractedness. Jack Conrad noted this in 1986 when writing on the 10th anniversary of the Soweto uprising: "A revolutionary situation has now existed for a decade in South Africa. This is an extraordinarily spread out period for such conditions to exist. That it has shown that neither the forces of liberation nor those of apartheid have been sufficiently strong enough over the other to score a decisive victory" (*The Leninist* No33, June 14 1986).

This was not just our view, it used to be the view of the SACP too: "The revolutionary situation in South Africa is maturing," not only do "growing numbers among the exploited classes and the oppressed fully realise that revolution is necessary" but "increasingly, the ruling class acts in a way which shows that it cannot rule in the old way" (*African Communist* No101, second quarter 1985).

Unlike the SACP, we still believe that South Africa is in a revolutionary situation. This is not because we believe that mass insurrection is an *immediate* question. We do not live in a fantasy world. But if you subscribe to Lenin's famous dictum (which we do) that a revolutionary situation is when the ruling class can no longer rule in the old way and the masses refuse to be ruled in the old way, then it is obvious that a revolutionary situation still exists in South Africa. Since 1976 the apartheid state has had to resort to different forms of rule in order to cling on to power. This has ranged from Vorster's eternal 'separate development' to Botha's terroristic 'state of emergency' to De Klerk's 'peace negotiations'.

Here a comparison with Russia is useful. South Africa, like Russia pre-February 1917, awaits its democratic revolution. The old beast of apartheid is still in power and is determined to stay there. In order to head off a revolutionary situation and divert it into the dead end of reformism, the apartheid regime is acting like the Tsar in 1905 and is offering a sop. The Tsar offered the sham democracy of the Duma; apartheid is offering negotiations and a 'peaceful settlement'.

As all revolutionaries can clearly see, the ANC leadership has gone for the sop. To be frank, this is hardly surprising. We expected this from the ANC, which is a black bourgeois national liberation movement and hence inherently prone to a compromise with the white bourgeois ruling class; but for the SACP, which is meant to be the general staff of the most advanced section of the working class, to fall for this sop is unforgivable.

The ANC is behaving like the Cadet Party in Russia. The Cadets believed in a constitutional monarchy, or even at a push a republic, made up of 'progressive' landlords, members of the middle bourgeoisie and the bourgeois intelligentsia, headed by Miliukov, a professor of history. The Cadets were terrified of working class revolution.

As a certain Leon Trotsky astutely observed: "Feeling in the first hours of the February revolution that it was drowning, the bourgeoisie grabbed at a straw. It needed the monarchy, not because that was a faith common to it and the people; on the contrary, the bourgeoisie had nothing left to set against the faith of the people but a crowned phantom. The 'educated' classes of

Russia entered the arena of the revolution not as the announcers of a rational state, but as defenders of medieval institutions. Having no support either in the people or in themselves, they sought it above themselves. Archimedes undertook to move the earth if they would give him a point of support. Miliukov was looking for a point of support in order to prevent the overthrow of the landlord's earth" (*The History of the Russian Revolution* p196).

History is in danger of repeating itself, this time with apartheid as the Tsar, the ANC as the Cadets and Nelson Mandela as Miliukov. Let us hope there is a South African Lenin waiting in the wings.

The new 'post-apartheid' state might have Nelson Mandela as president and all sorts of posts for top blacks; but it will do nothing for the black masses, nor will it resolve the revolutionary situation, a fact noted by the reactionary South African newspaper the *Sunday Times*: "the ANC is fighting to take over, more or less intact, the corrupt and oppressive system which sustained the privileges of the Nats" (December 15 1991).

As Marxists and the bourgeoisie both know, the revolutionary situation is at root economic. South Africa is not just another underdeveloped 'Third World' nation. It is a medium developed proto-imperialist country experiencing a profound organic crisis. This means that whether it is under De Klerk or a post-apartheid Nelson Mandela, the South African state cannot afford to let up on the *super-exploitation* of the mass of the working class. Indeed, by all economic accounts its world position is predicted to *deteriorate*, which means that the super-exploitation of the black masses could intensify under a post-apartheid democratic bourgeois regime. This is a very real danger.

Given this critical moment in history, a genuine Communist Party of South Africa is needed more than ever. Frankly, therefore, the social democratic process of liquidation of the SACP by the Slovo revisionists and the Hani centrists is a *crime* against the black working class.

There are many fine revolutionaries and communists in the SACP. It is their duty to rebel against the revisionist leadership, reforge the Communist Party and make it, once again, the vanguard of the revolution. There are encouraging signs that a genuine Marxist-Leninist tendency exists in the SACP.

Already Harry Gwala, a veteran communist, has condemned Slovo for wanting "to turn the SACP into an amorphous mess which allows in all and sundry and works towards reforming capitalism into 'democratic' socialism" (*Sunday Telegraph* December 8 1991).

Even more encouraging, there are signs of rank and file discontent. We express our agreement with comrade Tsepel Sibanyoni (Jabavu), who in a letter to *Umsebenzi* restated the only principled Marxist-Leninist position: "And I can assure you, comrade editor, no amount of diplomacy will stop the forces of reaction and counterrevolution from shooting and maiming residents ... I would like our forces to remember that you cannot win at the negotiation table that which you couldn't win at the battlefield. Which struggle are you extending by negotiations when most of the important pillars of this struggle have not been strengthened - eg armed struggle, underground, etc?" (September 14 1986).

We are confident that comrades Gwala and Sibanyoni are not alone. It is the duty of the communists in the SACP to debate their differences openly, in an honest Leninist way. Not to do so is an act of opportunism. Unfortunately, the spirit of open debate is still a stranger to the SACP. When one of our supporters visited the SACP office in Cape Town the comrades there refused to discuss internal differences within the SACP with him, saying that the most important thing was to avoid creating divisions within the liberation movement. In its own way this is anti-Leninist.

South Africa faces a stark choice. Either a proletarian-led revolution, based on factory committees, street committees and soviets, or fascist counterrevolution, whether this is led by the army, the AWB or Inkatha (for various reasons, it is almost unthinkable on the left to conceive of Inkatha as the carriers of fascist counterrevolution).

The more intelligent and perceptive newspapers have pointed to this alternative. *The Independent* commented on the fact that senior officials within the government and the ANC privately acknowledge the fact that South Africa is advancing along a 'twin track', one towards 'peaceful' settlements, the other towards 'anarchy' (ie violent revolution). Pertinently, *The Independent* pointed to the danger of a rightwing backlash and bloody counterrevolution, as the security police, special forces and military intelligence fraternity strike back, seeing "themselves as the last line of defence against the godless anarchy of black African rule" (December 28 1991).

More ominously, *The Independent* illustrated how this scenario could unfold in reality: "One former member of military intelligence said last week that it could only take a handful of well trained men to do what the coup plotters in Moscow should have done: immobilise the government by deploying their information, skill and armaments to shut down the country's telecommunications and

transport systems. The stage would then be set for the right, with these key sectors of the security forces as their backbone, to do its worst. It has the capacity now to deploy an army of half a million armed and trained men. Large arms caches, including AK-47s from Mozambique, are being buried on remote farms" (*Ibid*).

This is a frighteningly accurate description of how a counterrevolution would start, from a member of the white ruling class; clearly we are dealing with the 'Chile scenario'. Given this barbarous potential, it is criminal folly for the SACP leadership to preach 'official optimism' and to disarm the black workers, both politically and literally.

The objective conditions are ripe - if not over ripe - for socialist revolution, contrary to the SACP *Manifesto*. The subjective question, ie the question of the SACP, is pivotal. It is criminal to avoid the question of the SACP and the role it must play in the revolution.

As we noted before, the spontaneity of the insurrections and rebellions which characterised South Africa from 1976 onwards proved to be the source of their immense strength and their fatal weakness. The fact that the insurrections were totally spontaneous and not led by any organisation meant that the anger of the masses could not be hampered or diverted. Political organisations can lag behind the masses and play a conservative role. However, spontaneity always leads in the end to despair and disillusionment, which in turn leads to either apathy or futile acts of individual terrorism. It is an axiom of Marxism-Leninism that revolutionary socialist consciousness has to be brought to the working class from *without*. The masses cannot achieve socialism by themselves. Only with a revolutionary leadership, guided by the most advanced theory, can the revolution succeed and consolidate itself.

In relation to South Africa, the lack of any revolutionary leadership and advanced Marxist-Leninist theory ensured that the revolutionary energy of the black youth could never consolidate itself into a consistent and effective assault on the *bourgeois* regime.

A very healthy development for the future of the revolution was, at the initiation of the ANC/SACP, the creation of elected street committees, with delegates to them known as 'comrades'. These street committees filled the vacuum left by the expulsions of the black quisling police and local councillors, and obviously represented the *embryo* of dual power. For this embryonic dual power to develop into *national* dual power, the street committees would have had to unite on a township basis and then spread nationally.

For this to happen without the forces of the state crushing the 'comrades' into the ground mercilessly, we argued at the time that the SACP "must fuse the MK guerillas with the street committees and fight to build workers' committees in the factories, mines and workplaces, uniting them all at a national level. Centrally it must bring communist ideology and vision to the service of the masses and mould all popular organisations into organisations of insurrection" (*The Leninist* No33, June 14 1986).

Tragically for the black working class, this did not occur. Disastrously, the very opposite has happened. The MK guerillas were *not* fused with the street committees and Hani has treacherously suggested the MKs be fused with the armed wing of the apartheid state, the SADF, as he sees "no problem in using the skills, expertise and professionalism of the SADF" in some future 'national democratic army' (*Work in Progress* No77, September 1991). This is an obscene insult to the black masses who have suffered daily humiliation and terror at the hands of the SADF.

Communists recognise that the revolution in South Africa is not some mechanical inevitability. Without a strong and disciplined Communist Party, which can break down and overcome divisions in the working class and *exploit* divisions within the *white* and *black* potential ruling class, there is always the danger of the revolutionary situation being resolved negatively, through fascism and monolithic terror. The stakes are too high for hesitancy and vacillation from the revolutionary movement.

The question of the SACP is even more urgent now than it was in 1990, when we declared that: "The revolutionary youth are not interested in reformism. But what these young comrades most desperately lack is clear, Leninist theory and leadership. Now is no time to wait and see: genuine communists must fight for genuine communism. What is needed in South Africa is a Communist Party of South Africa. The first step towards that must be a clear, principled and disciplined challenge to the right moving Slovo leadership" (*The Leninist* No94, August 31 1990).

That challenge is not being made. The SACP leadership has gone to the right and is intent on social democratisation (even if it does retain the name 'communist'). The counterrevolution in the ex-Soviet Union has qualitatively speeded up this process of 'official communist' decay. Genuine communists in the SACP must *rebel* against the reformist leadership, expel the impostors and put the socialist revolution in South Africa back on the agenda. It is either that or face fascism and bloody counterrevolution.

Eddie Ford

THE LENINIST

OUR HISTORY

CPGB backs Irish liberation

The formation of the CPGB and its early years: documents, resolutions and manifestos

■ Interesting but hardly surprising was the note by Observer columnist Simon Hoggart (November 17 1991) that the woman who is now head of MI6 "has been active for many years" in the Labour Party and "was seen at the Party's conference in Brighton this year, wearing a 'staff' badge".

■ The overdue issue of *Militant's International Review* has not been published yet "because of internal difficulties", we are told by a supporter of *Militant Tendency*.

■ Not content with having rubbished the good name of the Communist Party of Great Britain, the Euros are now threatening all sorts of legal penalties if branches and districts do not hand over their funds, built up over years by the hard efforts of comrades, to the Democratic Left. Shakespeare had a word for it, as he generally does: "Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing ... but he that filches from me my good name robs me of that which not enriches him. And makes me poor indeed".

■ It isn't funny that the Morning Star's computers were stolen by burglars at the beginning of the month, nor that the said crims came back to finish the job a couple of days later. What will surely raise a titter however is that the fearless revolutionaries guarding the premises the second time round relied on "friendly neighbours", and were "reassured by police checks throughout the night". Confirmation perhaps that it isn't only Labour and Tory that will jump on the law and order train.

■ More on law and order, Stars and trains - in the same issue Mike Ambrose gives unconditional and uncritical support, not to the Irish revolutionaries attacking Downing Street, but to poor embattled John Major and his valiant police force. Should Star readers then be surprised to be served up a whacky letter deprecating the IRA for blowing up railway lines as the "highest degree of sick mindedness" because it demonstrates no "concern for the future of this mode of transport"? We think not.

■ And finally, did you hear the one about Peter Brooke being asked to resign? He's been offered a contract by RTE to share a programme with Daniel O'Donnell - Country Across the Barricades.



The IRA mounted an armed struggle against British occupation

AS THE Communist Party of Great Britain emerged at its founding congress in August 1920, the British state was engaged in a ruthless war against the Irish. The republic proclaimed by the 1916 Easter Rising had been drowned in blood by the British Army, but in subsequent elections the Irish people produced landslide victories for Sinn Fein, which called for Irish independence.

In 1919 the Sinn Fein MPs set up the Dail Eireann, the Irish parliament, in Dublin and once again declared an Irish Republic. Within months the British branded the Dail an illegal assembly and issued warrants to arrest its members.

The liberation forces prepared for a guerilla war. The Irish Republican Army was formed from the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizens Army, Ireland's 'red army'. It seized weapons bound for the British army and the USA.

Britain poured thousands of troops into Ireland, including the notorious terror force known as the 'Black and Tans'. When the IRA mounted an ambush, the British retaliated by burning local villages, farms and factories.

In Belfast the Unionists called for a 'holy war' against Catholics - this resulted in 5,000 workers being driven out of their jobs in the shipyards, and tens of thousands were forced to abandon their homes in the nationalist areas.

Irish working class militancy grew. Plants were taken over by the workers and run under soviet control. Dockers refused to handle munitions for the British troops, and railworkers refused to start trains if they were boarded by the Black and Tans. A general strike lasting three days secured the release of political prisoners who had been on hunger strike.

The absence of any support from the British working class weakened the Irish struggle; with it the British State might have faced total defeat in Ireland and a workers' republic on its doorstep. Needless to say this

would have advanced the cause of British workers too.

The following statement from the Executive Committee outlined the Party's position on the war in Ireland.

Communists and Ireland

The news that comes daily from Ireland is in itself a summons to the Communist Party of Great Britain.

The recurrent series of assassinations and "reprisals" is the most dramatic feature of the struggle. But of even deeper consequence is the slow strangling of the economic life of the Irish people. The closing of the railways, the destruction of crops and creameries are having - and are designed to have - the same effect upon Ireland as the war-time blockade upon Central Europe.

Step by step the economic life of the country is being destroyed. Between September 1919 and September 1920 ninety villages and country towns were shot up, and in many cases completely wrecked. Between June 1920 and October 1920 thirty creameries were destroyed. Over large areas rick-yards have been set on fire by the Forces of the Crown. The destruction of the hay makes the winter feeding of cattle impossible. Even rich rural areas are threatened with starvation.

A nation is being murdered under our eyes - not in Armenia, but within a hundred miles of our own shores - not by Turks or Kurds or Bashi-Bazouks, but by British men, carrying out the orders of a British government.

There are Communists who say: "This is true. But it is not our concern. This is a Nationalist struggle. And we are not Nationalists. We are Internationalists. This is a race struggle. Our job is the class struggle."

That is a hasty and a short-sighted judgement. In such a case as Ireland's - the case of a small nation held in forcible suppression by a great Imperialist State - the National struggle and

the class struggle are inseparable from one another. The struggle against Imperialism for national independence is a necessary phase of the struggle against capitalism for the workers' independence.

Right through its history the domination of England over Ireland has been economic as well as political. It has been an exploitation as well as an oppression; and against that double tyranny the Irish have carried on a double war - for political and economic freedom - "for our lands and our liberties", as James Fenton Laylor phrased it.

James Connolly was shot (a wounded prisoner, carried to the place of execution because his legs were shattered) as an Irish rebel. He gave his life for the freeing of Ireland. But he gave it too for the freeing of the working class. And the Irish Republican movement today is the same movement for which he died.

Connolly himself had grasped very firmly the essential fact of the oneness of the two movements. It is the theme of half his writings.

"In the evolution of civilisation", he wrote, "the progress of the fight for national liberty of any subject nation must perforce keep pace with the progress of the struggle for liberty of the most subject class in that nation."

And again: "The Irish working class remain as the incorruptible inheritors of the fight for freedom in Ireland."

That is as true today as when Connolly wrote it. The Republican movement is essentially a working class movement. There are, it is true, middle class men as well as bourgeois by the chance of birth. But they do not mould it. They are being moulded by it. The strength and vigour and inspiration of the movement lies in the workers and the workers' organisations.

Its ideals go far beyond mere political independence. Even those who are not Communists or Socialists of any kind have some vision that their job is not merely the ousting of the English government, but the overthrow of the English system - which is the capitalist system. And the workers themselves see in the establishment of the Irish

Republic the first step - the necessary first step - to the establishment of the Irish Workers' Republic.

The Republican movement is a workers' movement. And it is the Irish workers upon whom the chief brunt of the Greenwood Terror is falling. The big majority of the men and women killed have been workers. The dwelling houses burnt have been workers' houses. It is the workers who go in want because of the burning of creameries and factories and crops. It is the Irish railwaymen who are being dismissed in hundreds because they refuse to transport the troops and the "Black and Tans" who are terrorising their countrymen and devastating their country.

The Irish workers are suffering - grimly resolved to stay it out until the finish. And the British do nothing. Is it strange that the Irish speak of us bitterly, as men betrayed by someone on whom they should have been able to count?

They look for nothing from the Tories. They look for nothing from the Liberals. For they know the history of their own country, and they know that Liberal Governments have been as prolific as the Tories in the matter of coercion Bills. They remember "Buck-Shot Forster". They have not forgotten that Mr Asquith's Government, in the year of the rising, shot fourteen prisoners, arrested 3,226 men, deported 1,949, and suppressed 13 newspapers. They count Mr Lloyd George and Sir Hamar Greenwood very typical Liberals.

But from the British working class they had expected better things. They have heard talk from us of international solidarity. In practice they see British troops, the sons, many of them, of trade unionists, shooting Irish workers. They see Ireland coerced with munitions made and transported by British trade union labour. They see Irish railway men dismissed, and not a murmur from Unity House. They see every foul device of imperialist tyranny employed against them with at any rate the passive acquiescence of the British working class.

They are bitter; they have good reason to be bitter. They have not counted on our assistance. They will not ask for it. They will carry on the struggle themselves whatever the cost and whatever the issue.

But they know that we have betrayed them; and they despise us for it. They talk of us with contemptuous pity. And we deserve that they should do so. For we have betrayed them, and, in doing so we are betraying the working class movement.

For us, if we were to connive at these things, to claim for our motto, "Workers of the World Unite" would be merely to add hypocrisy to treachery. Not only the Irish, but the working class all the world over is looking to us. We are being weighed in the Irish balance, and if we are found wanting, not all the enunciations of orthodox formulae, not all the protestations of the purity of our Communist faith will save us from contemptuous dismissal as faithful, though sometimes talkative, servants of the British Imperial oligarchy.

Executive Committee, Communist Party of Great Britain
The Communist, November 25 1920

Compiled by Doug Hulme

REVIEWS

Gay past

Martin Baum Duberman, Martha Vicinus and George Chauncey (eds), *Hidden from History: reclaiming the gay and lesbian past*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth 1991, pp579, £8.99

THIS BOOK presents us with a series of essays dealing with the subject of homosexuality and describes how lesbians and gay men have experienced life throughout history and in different societies. In particular, the authors capture a homosexual past which has been buried and distorted throughout the ages and reconvey it, factually and honestly.

Throughout, we are provided with well researched and detailed accounts showing that homosexuality is not "abnormal", "perverse" or "unnatural", as the 'moral majority' would have us believe, but how, under specific conditions and cultures, some societies have actually encouraged same-sex relationships, viewing them as perfectly normal and acceptable.

As communists, we believe that sexual instincts and behaviour are moulded socially, not by the word of god, nor to fulfil the "natural" role that nature has bestowed upon us, but, ultimately, in order to preserve the ruling position of the dominant class.

This is well illustrated in the opening essay, 'Sex before sexuality', where David Halperin writes "an adult male citizen of Athens can have legitimate sexual relations only with statutory minors." Sexual relationships between men and boys were socially accepted and encouraged in ancient Greece in order to aid the manly education of the young and bond the males as a military force so vital in order to preserve and perpetuate the ruling position of the slave owning class.

Nowadays, under capitalism, sexual norms and values are different but are still needed in order to protect the interests of the ruling capitalist class. One of the key institutions within modern capitalist society is the family, which upholds what we are told are "traditional family values" - ie the "natural" role of men and women to fall in love, marry and have children etc. Given that same-sex relationships challenge the image and structure of the modern family, they also challenge its ability to produce labour power, one of the basic commodities necessary for the capitalist system to continue. Working class homosexuals and their lifestyles have therefore been subject to all sorts of attacks and ideological sneers.

As capitalism entered its decadent phase towards the end of the last century, so its need for a secure, rigid and particular type of family unit increased. Laws were introduced to reinforce the family and homosexual lifestyles were outlawed. As Jeffrey Weeks states in 'Inverts, perverts, and Mary-Annes': "All homosexual activities were illegal between 1885 and 1967 ... Given the legal situation since the end of the 19th century and the simultaneous refinement of hostile social norms, homosexual activity was potentially very dangerous for both parties and carried with it not only public disgrace but the possibility of a prison sentence."

Not all essays however are worthy of credit. Simon Karlinsky's 'The impact of the October Revolution' stands out as one. Karlinsky writes the following: "The seizure of power by Lenin and Trotsky in October 1917 was hailed by many then as an enhancement of the rights gained by the revolutions of 1905 and February 1917. But as far as rights (including gay rights) and personal freedoms are concerned, the October Revolution was actually a reversal and a negation of the two earlier revolutions rather their continuation."

To back up his argument, the author lists various freedoms that were indeed granted to the masses under the Provisional government between the Febr-

uary and October revolutions. To enforce his point, he even states that "... the prominent feminist Sophia Panina was given a cabinet-level post" (as if this was somehow a good thing!). He then illustrates how gay rights deteriorated following the Bolshevik revolution until Stalin finally outlawed sexual relations between men in the Soviet Penal Code of 1934.

Karlinsky's writing lacks any scientific or historical analysis. When a country finds itself in a revolutionary situation, masses of the population can expect to be granted a wide range of "freedoms" from the residing government in order to maintain the dominant position of the ruling class. Such was the case in Russia between February and October 1917.

The Provisional government, acting in the interests of the bourgeois establishment, conceded many fundamental rights to the majority of the population in order to avert the threat of revolution. But the Bolsheviks led Soviet workers to victory in October. They understood that any rights gained under capitalism were only temporary and could not be guaranteed to last.

Because of the failure of revolutions in Europe however, the Soviet Union remained isolated in its victory over capitalism: the consequences of this were tragic. The necessity of Soviet democracy and unrestricted working class rule gave way to the bureaucratisation of the governing strata. Hand in hand with this went an atavistic turn to communism in one country and reactionary family values. Thus homosexuals were seen as a threat, and laws were introduced which outlawed sex between men.

There was nothing inevitable about this, contrary to what Karlinsky believes: communists should have resisted and could have won. As to the future we have no doubt that socialism remains the only true hope for lesbians and gay men. *Hidden from history* does not come up with this nor any other far reaching conclusions or ideas for the way forward. Nevertheless it is a useful reference book for communists in their struggle to liberate all humanity from the shackles of exploitation and oppression.

Gareth Phillips

Cosatu

Jeremy Baskin, *Striking Back: a history of Cosatu*, Verso, London 1991, pp488, £12.95

IN NOVEMBER 1985 the Congress of South African Trade Unions was launched as a federation to co-ordinate and unify the multitude of diverse trade unions in South Africa. Its achievements in its short history from 1985 to 1990 as outlined in *Striking Back*, considering both internal dissension and external oppression by the apartheid government, is really astounding. It has truly lived up to its description by Cyril Ramaphosa at its launching that a "giant has risen".

Its success during this period can be assessed from the fact that at its launch Cosatu delegates represented 460,000 workers in 33 unions, and in five years it had grown to a force of 1.2 million affiliated members.

One of the earliest achievements of Cosatu, and a necessary pre-condition for its future successes in struggles against the ruling class, was its foresightedness and ability to implement the slogan of 'One Industry - One Union'. Since their earliest formation in the early part of this century, black trade unions had naturally followed the traditional path of trade organisation, which meant a multiplicity of unions organising within a particular industry, the resulting division of the workforce representatives being exploited by the employers in any negotiations. The realisation of industrial unionism showed how union leaders, many fresh

from the factory floor, had learned the lessons of the peril of trade divisions within their ranks from the trade union movement of the advanced industrial countries, which we in Britain have suffered from for so many years.

Not only has industrial unionism enabled workers to present a united front to the employers in negotiations, but has also enabled shop floor organisation to develop on a strong basis. This has not only strengthened the industrial struggle, but made it easier to link industrial struggles with the fight in the townships against rent increases etc, the initiative for which has largely developed from the rank and file itself. One gets the impression that, on the basis of this cooperation between industrial and township struggles, it would be but a short step toward the establishment of workers' councils.

An important factor in Cosatu's growth and successes in struggles has been the fact that it has not confined itself to narrow trade union activities; of fighting purely bread and butter issues, important as they are for the impoverished South African workers. It was recognised from the beginning that the struggle for a decent living standard was inextricably bound up with the struggle against apartheid as a form of capitalism, enforced upon the black workers by a minority white ruling class and its state machine. This fact was unambiguously stated by one Mark Shope of Sactu many years before, in 1964 at a conference in Ghana: It "must never be forgotten that apartheid and racial discrimination in South Africa ... has an aim far more important than discrimination itself; the aim is economic exploitation. The root and fruit of apartheid and racial discrimination is profit" (original emphasis - p4).

As the history of Cosatu unfolds, one realises that this is not just a theoretical pronouncement, but an inescapable fact of life for the black workers. Fights on the economic and political fields are complementary and inextricably bound together; the fight for a decent life is also a struggle against oppression which seeks to curtail that struggle, and for the right to organise both industrially and politically.

The basic political differences within the union movement as a whole revolved around the question of the struggle against apartheid, with the Cosatu leadership favouring a broad cross class united front which involved united action with non-working class organisations, whereas the smaller independent unions led by, among others, the black consciousness movement, argued for a workers' united front.

The reasoning of the Cosatu leadership was in line with that of the mentality of the ANC and its now watered down Freedom Charter, where its partial nationalisation proposals have been relegated to the distant future. The South African Communist Party, a long time ally and influential force within the ANC, went even further and opposed Cosatu "articulating socialist slogans, arguing that this was premature" (p430).

De Klerk, under the irresistible pressure of mass strikes and demonstrations, announced a series of reforms, including the intention of releasing Mandela unconditionally. Even though the Cosatu leadership had reservations about his reforms, the SACP "labelled De Klerk's moves as 'positive steps'" and called upon the democratic movement "to take full advantage of the new political climate" (p420).

In our consideration of Cosatu we must, as Marxists, recognise that it is a union movement, and as such has limitations on the role it can play. In spite of this the fact that the history of Cosatu's growth and successes lies in the unending bitter and heroic struggles of its rank and file members against the employers, their state machine, and their lackeys, Buthelezi's Inkatha movement, is a source of great confidence for the future.

Terry Coates

ACTION

Communist Party

London Seminars: 5pm Sundays. Details 071-431 3135.

Weekly discussion on current political developments. The first part of each seminar constitutes a comprehensive course throughout 1992 on Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism: February 2: Consciousness. February 9: Towards Marxism. February 16: Opponents of philosophical materialism. February 23: Academic 'Marxism'.

Communist Party streetwork and campaigning in the four constituencies where we have adopted prospective parliamentary candidates: Glasgow (Tam Dean Burn): Join the CP's distribution of *Glasgow - City of Struggle* on anti-Trident march, Saturday February 1. Rhondda (Mark Fischer). Bethnal Green and Stepney (Stan Kelsey): Weekly activist meetings in the constituency. Brent East (Anne Murphy): Brent demonstration against cuts and rent rises - Monday February 3, assemble 4pm Kilburn Square NW6. Protest meeting Thursday February 6, 8pm Kilburn Library, Salusbury Rd, NW6 (nearest tube, Queens Park). Offers of help please to 071-431 3135 building these events.

Hands Off Ireland!

Saturday April 18: HOI! march and rally to commemorate the 1916 Easter Rising and demand Troops out now! and Self determination for the Irish Nation! Leaflets and posters available now. Has your organisation sponsored yet?

Unemployed Workers Charter

Saturday February 29: NATIONAL MARCH AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT - Assemble 12 noon, Clerkenwell Green. March moves off 1pm. Rally in Trafalgar Square 3pm.

Support for the march is coming in from the Campaign Group of Labour MPs, the Socialist Workers Party and TUC Unemployed Centres up and down the country. The UWC is taking the lead in building for the demonstration on the ground. We need people to commit themselves to distributing *Unemployed Organiser*; we need donations to cover the cost of the march; but most of all we need you to be there on February 29 to march with the UWC, as we demand - Organise the Unemployed! Work or Full Benefit! House the Homeless!

● London organising meetings every week.

● *Unemployed Organiser* - 20p each plus 10p p&p, or £1.50 for 10.

● Poster and leaflets available. Ask for details of bulk rates/postage.

For further information on CPGB, HOI! or UWC activities, write to

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A series of four books by Jack Conrad, a member of the CPGB Provisional Central Committee.

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SUBSCRIBE

THE NEWS of the expulsion from Militant of Ted Grant, the organisation's founder and leader for the last forty odd years, is not surprising. The tensions within this bureaucratically run group have become intolerable as the majority moved to take a stance more independent organisationally from their Labour host.

This has been bitterly contested by the veteran Trotskyite Ted Grant. His dismal 'stay in and keep your heads down' strategy was firmly rejected by the majority of the organisation in a special conference in October of last year when Grant's proposal was defeated by a majority of 86%. In December of last year, the decisive breach was made in Scotland when an open Militant organisation was launched - Scottish Militant Labour. A split was inevitable given the undemocratic and sectarian approach to politics of both sides. (Characteristically, Militant of January 24 announced the expulsion as the culmination of "a thorough democratic ... debate" - which never once was reported in the pages of *Militant* itself!)

This new group claims 800 members and intends to stand candidates in three Glasgow constituencies - Garscadden, Pollok and Cathcart. Meanwhile, south of the border, Terry Fields MP has said he will stand as an independent in Liverpool Broadgreen after his recent expulsion. And Lesley Mahmood, who lost on the Real Labour ticket in June's Liverpool Walton by-election, will again stand against the official Labour candidate.

The position of the other Labour MP associated with Militant - Dave Nellist (Coventry South East) - is more ambiguous. Nellist leaned towards Grant in the Militant leadership and is thus loath to be seen to back the open Militant challenge to Labour. Yet he is under massive pressure to stand from his constituency activists, who have been deprived of their selected MP.

Nellist's dilemma reflects tensions that have torn Militant apart. Ted Grant built an organisation loyal to Labourism, if not the Labour Party under Kinnock. For over 40 years the Militant organisation and its forerunners under Grant have merged them-

Coming out

Militant wants a 'Real' Labour Party. What workers need is a reformed Communist Party

selves into the left wing of social democracy. Some Trotskyites were 'born' left Labourites, some 'achieved' left Labourism and some had left Labourism thrust upon them: the result has always been the same, however. Grant's organisation, nominally committed in its early years to entryist work in order to split and replace Labour, has become a left Labourite, reformist organisation.

Labour under scab-herder Kinnock, however, is not a place where anyone professing even 'socialist' convictions has a place. Kinnock's pogroms have marshalled even former lefties - Clare Short for example - to hound and harass the left of the party. Many hundreds of Militant supporters have been forced out and have therefore demanded that their own leadership respond more aggressively.

It is to this pressure from the rank and file - and success in heading the anti-poll tax movement - that the likes of Taaffe, Fields and, however reluctantly, Nellist are responding. The Socialist Workers Party, which itself is calling for a "real socialist party", will seek to gain recruits by backing the campaign, but without a fundamental reorientation *politically*, however, this challenge to the Labour Party is doomed.

Grant is spot on when he dubs the 'new turn' of the majority of the organisation "neither fish nor fowl". While he and the 1,500 supporters he claims for his position launch a new entryist organisation and bury themselves even deeper in the bowels of Labour,

the majority in Militant, unless they can execute a fundamental reorientation, are on the road to an ILP-type oblivion.

Ostensibly, Militant claims to be a revolutionary organisation. We have disputed this claim (see Jack Conrad *Which Road* pp201-232). Yet the move to open work, independent of Labour, is being heralded under the banner of 'Real Labour' or 'Militant Labour'. The new publication *Scottish Militant*, which at the moment is only the standard *Militant* with a few modifications, illustrates the contradictory position Militant now finds itself in. It declares itself "for a Labour government", yet stands against Labour in elections; it "urged those not expelled ... to stay and fight", yet it signed up 800 members - many more than the total number expelled nationally.

The fact that Militant has, to all intents and purposes, *organisationally* broken from the Labour Party is good. We did everything we could to encourage this break. That is why we backed Lesley Mahmood in the Walton by-election. However it has to be emphasised that we did so as a matter of tactics, not principle. Not only was our support for Mahmood *critical* but it was designed to prise open Militant, to open it up to the challenge represented by the politics of communism and the necessity of reforing the Communist Party of Great Britain - the highest achievement of our working class in Britain. Now that Militant has been forced out of its Labourite organisational cocoon its Labourite *politics* must be fully exposed and defeated. That is why the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB has offered to support Militant's general election candidates on the minimum platform printed below.

Unfortunately we do not think Militant will be willing to defend such a basic platform of working class resistance. Militant is moving, trying to understand the negative lessons of its last 40 years, facing the challenge which will ultimately be faced by the majority of the working class. But it is on politically very shaky ground indeed, and could easily find itself dashed on the rocks.

The fact that the 'new turn' is centred on Scotland does not bode well. While it is the democratic right of the people of Scotland to choose their own form of government, any pandering to nationalism is certainly against the interests of workers in Britain and a violation of proletarian internationalism. Neither an independent Scotland in Europe, which Militant opposes, nor a devolved assembly within Britain, which

Militant advocates, will change the degree of control exercised by the Scottish workers over their own lives by one iota. Worse: it is a diversion from the class struggle which can most effectively be pursued when the workers clearly understand that the central organs of the state are its primary targets. The establishment of separate Scottish or Welsh organisations can only cloud this issue and sow nationalist illusions and fantasy among the British working class.

The alignment of the Militant split along nationalist lines is therefore dangerously opportunist. It attempts to flow with the tide of opinion in Scotland, while ignoring the fundamental political realignment required along class lines throughout Britain. In fact Militant itself is the victim of an illusion which is not intrinsically its own but, through the weakness of its politics, it has no defence against.

It is unfortunate that Scottish Militant Labour promises no more than the Scottish Labour Party before it, which in its turn attempted to establish an independent left Labourite manifestation. Unfortunately, because however small, Militant does lead a section of the working class, and if it fails to draw the correct conclusions from its experience, then it may take those workers down with it.

Across Britain as a whole Militant is still presenting itself as mainstream British left Labourism, but it does not have the majority of the organised working class movement affiliated to it, nor the 'moderate' wing that makes Labour a governmental alternative acceptable to the bourgeoisie. Thus it is without a hope of being elected.

Organisationally, the majority of Militant Tendency is now in a process of breaking with its own programme. Whether or not this break results in anything positive for the working class remains to be seen. The Grant faction, whatever its numerical strength and the number of cadres it will take from 'Real Militant', has a hopelessly passive strategy and is on the road to nowhere; without confronting the politics of communism, however, the majority will not be long following it.

Ian Mahoney and Mike Smith

Communists demand what workers need, not what the state says it can afford

- Smash the poll tax and end victimisation of non-payers. No taxes on the working class.
- Abolish all immigration controls.
- Abolish all laws discriminating against lesbians and gays.
- Abolish all anti trade union laws.
- Enforce a national minimum wage of £250 for a 35 hour week.
- Work or full benefit equal to national minimum wage.
- Full state pension equal to national minimum wage.
- Free abortion on demand, free 24 hour creche facilities.
- Immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. Self determination for the Irish nation.

Pensioners' rights are workers' rights

IN DENMARK, pensioners organised in the so called C-Team Riot Group have been conducting illegal occupations of facilities earmarked for closure. This direct action is gaining the support of thousands of elderly people across the country, and is difficult for the state to counter, not wishing to be seen to beat pensioners off the streets. Militancy by pensioners is a first step towards achieving working class action for the elderly. The same is true in Britain.

Pensioners get a bad deal even by capitalist standards. Three out of five old people live in poverty as defined by the bourgeois state. Of the top seven industrialised European nations, Britain has the largest gap between wages and pensions and the second lowest pension in terms of purchasing power.

Prior to 1980 pensions were linked to average earnings, but the Thatcher government linked them to price rises (after a time lag) instead. As a result pensioners are worse off by £13 for a single pensioner and £21 for a couple. The trend away from state pensions is part of the Tory drive to abolish the welfare state.

The 1986 Social Security Act reduced the additional earnings-related part of the state pension from 25% of income in the best 20 years to 20% of lifetime average earnings. Workers are encouraged to transfer from Serps (state earnings related pension scheme)

There are 11 million pensioners in Britain - one in five of the population. The vast majority are working class. Five million are over 75 and nearly one million over 85. The proportion will continue to increase, especially those over 75

to personal pension arrangements. This is designed to cut costs.

The Tories claim they are increasing freedom of choice for pensioners. This is untrue. British capitalism cannot afford to give the rising number of pensioners an income sufficient to provide any sort of decent life. The ratio of tax payers to pensioners will decrease from 2.3:1 to 1.6:1 by the year 2045. Hence the idea of shifting the burden to individuals, through personal pension plans, company pensions, and additional voluntary contributions.

The discriminatory pension qualifying ages of 65 for men and 60 for women were recently challenged in the European court, and the government now intends to make it equal for both sexes. It says 60 will be too expensive, and has plumped for 63.

Local authorities are legally obliged to provide services for the elderly such as domestic help, meals on wheels, day centres and clubs, and home adaptations and aids. The government's policy of reducing grants to local authorities, combined with the effect of the poll tax,

has made these services completely inadequate. Communists must therefore take the lead in demanding that the state provides what old people need to live secure and comfortable lives.

As capitalism is increasingly unable to do so, this becomes a revolutionary demand, and will feature prominently in the programme of the reformed CPGB. We will not tell pensioners to fight for revolution and wait until communism. Such minimum demands must be fought for in the here and now, not only by pensioners but the whole working class movement.

Several pensioners organisations currently exist, such as the Pensioners Liaison Forum and the National Pensioners Convention, which is supported by the TUC and attended each year by about a thousand representatives of pensioners' associations. However, all these movements are reformist and believe pensioners can get a better deal through parliament and the "next Labour government".

True, the Labour Party has woken up to the increasing power of the eld-

erly, but as voters, not as agents of revolutionary change. As we know, Kinnock is committed to running capitalism, and capitalism will be just as unable to meet the needs of pensioners under Labour as under the Tories.

All working class people deserve a secure, dignified and comfortable old age. Their needs should be met fully by the state, and should be available by right. Our old people must not suffer the humiliation and anxiety of relying on charity for their needs. Thus our Party puts forward the following minimum demands:

1. No compulsory retirement. The right to retirement from age 60 for all workers, or earlier if negotiated, for unpleasant or dangerous jobs.
2. State pension at the level of the minimum wage, which at today's prices should be £250 per week, and paid to everyone who has retired.
3. Adequate housing suitable for all pensioners. This will include council houses designed for families with elderly relatives living with them; rent free, low rise flats for retired couples and

Mary Goodwin

Bureaucratic socialism and the market

“WE NOTE that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as a subject of international law and a geopolitical reality has ceased to exist". This statement, by the leaders of the Russian, Belorussian and Ukrainian Republics was the reading of the last rites to the USSR on December 8 1991.

It was no more than formal recognition of the death by a thousand cuts of the Soviet socialist state, culminating in Yeltsin's counterrevolutionary coup of August 1991.

This has strengthened the intellectual assault on the ideas of Marxism, communism and socialism. 'Postcommunism' is the 'in' academic buzz-word. The idea of revolutionary transformation of society is being disowned by many 'lefts' and finally buried (again) by the right. Socialism, we are told, has proven to be the transition between capitalism ... and capitalism.

In the wake of the counterrevolutions in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, leftists from the Militant Tendency to the Revolutionary Communist Party have had to revise their statements that nothing was happening worth getting lathered up about.

We are experiencing a period of unparalleled defeats for the world's working class. The 'official communists' who went along with Gorbachev's restorationist schemes have not only discredited communism but crossed class lines. Others, such as the Socialist Workers Party and RCP, who deny that the Soviet Union had anything to do with socialism since the 1920s, show their inability to concretely analyse what is happening in what the bourgeoisie used to call the Eastern Bloc.

Communists and the working class cannot afford ideological escape clauses. If we are to advance from this period of enforced retreat we must learn its lessons.

From the mid-1980s the assault on socialism from within has been pressed home under the guise of 'market socialism' in Eastern Europe, in China and as perestroika in the Soviet Union.

Marxists do not *eternalise* the relations of the market, as Gorbachev did when he projected its existence back into ancient society and forward into the foreseeable future. This article attempts to put the market into the context of the period of socialist transition, deal with its abuse by the 'market socialists' and look briefly at why such ideas have come to the fore in this period of the collapse of the bureaucratic socialist states.

Given this period of ideological retreat, the theoretical paucity of 'official communism', etc, it would be as well to start by establishing some basic concepts.

Firstly, in defending socialism and communism against its detractors, we must explain what we are talking about, the society for which we are fighting. Marx, in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, briefly describes this: "Within the cooperative society based on the common ownership of the means of production, producers do not exchange their products; just as little does the labour employed in the products appear here as the value of the products, as a material quality possessed by them, since now, in contrast to capitalist society, individual labour no longer exists in an indirect fashion but directly as a component part of the total labour" (p11).

Since the market is the forum for exchange, it is clear that such common ownership is incompatible with the existence of the market. But that does not resolve the matter, even for those only concerned with walking the dogma of supposed 'Marxist orthodoxy'. Rather than summing up the transition period between capitalism and communism - socialism - this describes its full flowering, the classless society of communism. This is only possible after the world socialisation of production, and the world elimination of scarcity, through the development of productive forces in the form of a worldwide plan. In between then and now, there is a whole epoch of struggle between the two systems, the communist future and the capitalist past; not in a mechanical way, in terms of simply clearing out all the old crap, like sweeping the decks, but through the contention of living social forces.

Lenin, in *Economics and politics in the era of the dictatorship of the proletariat*, argued that "there can be no doubt that between capitalism and communism there lies a definite transition period which must combine the features and properties of both these forms of social economy. This transition period has to be a period of struggle between dying capitalism and nascent communism - or, in other words, between capitalism which has been de-

feated but not destroyed and communism which has been born but is still very feeble" (CW Vol 30, p107).

What we mean by socialism is the entire transition period between capitalism and communism, under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Many on the left see socialism as the end aim, a 'finished product'. But socialism can only be defined as a transitional phase to communism. The motive social laws of such a society are therefore themselves of a transitional nature, combining elements of both capitalism and communism: "Socialism", as a separate socio-economic formation, a mode of production occupying a place peculiar to itself in history, does not exist" (R Yurukoglu, *Living Socialism*, p93).

The two determining laws which are operating in society during this period are the law of value and the law of the plan. These two are the fundamental laws of capitalist and communist society respectively.

Especially at a lower, earlier level in the period of transition we still see the existence of the market, of exchange, the existence therefore of money and of wage labour. These all illustrate that the law of value plays, to some extent, a determining role in socialism. What exists today is not just an increase in its role, but its domination throughout Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

I do not propose to undertake a detailed analysis of the various programmes and proposals that have been put forward in the ex-Soviet Union here. Many of these plans, by Messrs Shatalin, Aganbegyan, etc, were quickly consumed as they were overtaken by the chaos they helped create (For a brief outline of these debates, see RW Davies, 'Gorbachev's Socialism' in *New Left Review* January/February, 1990 and 'Soviet economic reform' in *International Rahe Kargar* December 1990). What I want to do is take a look at the essence of the two laws themselves and how they have combined concretely in the socialist and ex-socialist countries, particularly the Soviet Union.

It should be self evident that to understand 'market socialism' we must have a clear idea about what both these concepts represent. I will therefore establish my terms of reference with a reappraisal of the Marxist analysis of both market and plan.

Value and price

The market has become a universal panacea in what was the Soviet Union - for the intelligentsia and bureaucracy, at least. Its use as an "economic mechanism" is almost beyond contention in these circles. Yet, even stated at such a simple level, this view is totally incorrect.

To understand the market, we must grasp its essence - the law of value. Marx was the first to see, beneath the categories of the market economy, social relations between classes. The market is not a 'mechanism', like a macroeconomic spanner or power drill. It is the observable operation of concealed social relations of production between people.

A particular social form of labour provides the basis for this, which Marx called 'socially necessary abstract labour'. What determines socially necessary labour is not a mechanical averaging out of different levels of labour productivity, but an unconscious and objective social process by which one of these more or less efficient production processes dominates the market.

Abstract labour is the substance of value. It is arrived at through, and only through, the continuous process of commodity exchange; ie, it is a real social phenomenon, not (as some have interpreted it) a useful or arbitrary mental generalisation: "Abstract labour does not express a psychological equality of different forms of labour, but a social equalisation of different forms of labour which is realised in the specific form of equalisation of the products of labour" (II Rubin, *Essays on Marx's Theory of Value*, p71).

During exchange we equate, as values, different products. In doing so we equate the different kinds of labour used to create them in the form of abstract labour, shorn of everything that is specific to it as a type of concrete labour. This occurs outside of the consciousness of its participants. Thus, labour within a commodity economy is, of necessity, not immediately social but manifests itself as social labour only upon alienation - through the market.

What this produces, because the relationship of producers within society is no longer a direct one (as in a coerced form under feudalism and slavery, and as a voluntary association of producers under communism), is what Marx called commodity fetishism.

Commodities are the embodiment of alienated social labour, dominating society. Products rule their producers. What is truly human - production - seems external to humanity and is outside humanity's control. This phenomenon of alienation/reification was a cornerstone of Marx's revolutionary critique of capitalist society from the mid-1840s till his death.

This reification mystifies social relations: "the relations connecting the labour of one individual with that of the rest appear, not as direct social relations between individuals at work, but as what they really are, material relations between persons and social relations between things" (Capital Vol I, p73). So this is not just a mental mystification, but the objective form of social production.

Commodities, products for exchange, become the bearer of a social relation. Social relations of production, the dominant laws of human society, can only manifest themselves in an indirect way, through commodity exchange: "value can only manifest itself in the social relation of commodity to commodity" (Ibid, p47).

The market is the expression of this. Through it, social labour is distributed unconsciously, by the exchange of its products.

Socially necessary abstract labour time mystifies concrete labour times, distinct kinds of labour, in the act of exchange. The transformation of values into prices completes this fetishisation. The nature of this exchange makes social planning impossible under capitalism. Qualitatively different social forms of labour distinguish capitalism and communism.

The operation of the law of value acts like a one way street; one can reveal, as Marx does in *Capital*, how social labour in the form of value finds its expression in prices. He does not attempt to reverse this process to provide some kind of price theory, as classical political economy 'deduced' individual concrete labour times as being directly manifest in the price form.

The 19th century political economist, David Ricardo, attempted this. Labour time in general was taken as the magnitude of value, without consideration of why labour time should express itself in this way. Many 'Marxist' and radical economists share an approach with Ricardo. His errors are similar to the 'market socialists' today, as they too are unable to clearly distinguish between abstract and concrete labour, value and price, and understand their historically specific nature. We can see this in Marx's critique of Ricardo's one sided understanding of value: "On the one hand he must be reproached for not going far enough, for not carrying his abstraction to completion, for instance, when he analyses the value of the commodity, he at once allows himself to be influenced by consideration of all kinds of concrete conditions. On the other hand one must reproach him for regarding the phenomenal form as *immediate and direct* proof or exposition of the general laws, and for failing to interpret it. In regard to the first, his abstraction is too incomplete; in regard to the second, it is a formal abstraction which is in itself wrong" (Theories of Surplus Value Part II, p106).

We shall later see that by taking value as the "immediate and direct" form of labour time the 'market socialists' commit the same error, albeit more crudely and with none of Ricardo's originality. Marx's critique of political economy showed the impossibility of this: economic categories were not equilibrium mechanisms of distribution within society but mystified social relationships - relations between classes - whose mystification belied any attempt at rational allocation or equilibrium.

Value is therefore not empirically observable on the surface of capitalist society. It can only be said that price equals value on an aggregate social level, in the sense that price cannot be constituted of anything other than value. At the level of the individual commodity, though, "price ceases altogether to express value" (Capital Vol I, p102). Movements of supply and demand in themselves, therefore, tell us nothing of the concrete production process which determines their relations.

Surplus value and profit

Surplus value is rooted in wage labour, ie the separation of the worker from the means of production which is necessary for capitalist production. Workers are forced to sell their labour power to gain the necessities of life. Labour power itself becomes a commodity. But it is a unique commodity. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that its use value, for the capitalist class, is the source of greater value than is necessary to reproduce it - ie, the proletariat produces not only value but *surplus value*. This is appropriated by the capitalist class through exchange of *equivalents*: the proletariat receives for its labour power the value of its reproduction.

As explained above, price is a transformed form of value. Under capitalism, price of production is determined through the redistribution of surplus value between individual capitals in proportion to their magnitude, via the market.

Profit can therefore only be transformed surplus value. In *Capital* Marx considers commodity exchange in the form of the simple commodity economy, before coming to the capitalist economy; ie, the development of commodity relations to the point at which labour power becomes a commodity. Here, then, surplus value and therefore profit do not appear. The proponents of 'market socialism' transpose this onto socialist society as their model of non-exploitative society based on commodity production. Yet they do this while wishing to retain the category of profit, a phenomenon which does not arise in simple commodity production. While this shows a total ignorance of the *social* nature of the categories of political economy, the conclusion is a correct one, as in the modern world the *domination* of market relations can only lead to profit and therefore exploitation.

Revisionists take such categories outside of their historically and socially specific limits. But they can only be understood within such limits. Evgenii Preobrazhensky, a Bolshevik political economist, writing in the 1920s made the point in his *New Economics* that, "For surplus value to exist it is necessary that value in general should exist ... there is a second basic condition, namely that labour power should assume the form of a commodity, that is, that a free market should exist for a basic commodity, that of labour power. But the existence of labour power as a commodity presupposes the existence of a proletariat, divorced from the instruments of production, at one pole, and the existence of a class of purchasers of labour power, possessing a monopolist right of the ownership of the instruments of production, at the other. Consequently, the concept of surplus value presupposes not simply a relation of exploitation, but a relation of exploitation between entrepreneurs and wage owners" (p184, my emphasis).

Profit is not a physical amount of surplus product, it is a social relation between two classes. It is the form which the surplus product takes in capitalism: a social relationship which, unlike value, under socialist society cannot exist because there is no capitalist class. The post-revolutionary seizure of production by the workers' state therefore abolishes surplus product in the form of surplus value within the nationalised economy; as Preobrazhensky added: "The working class cannot exploit itself" (p188).

Market and plan

To summarise the above: the market is a spontaneous, anarchic allocation of social labour. Under capitalism, this allocation takes place through the competition of different capitals and the establishment of an average rate of profit. Underlying this is the redistribution of surplus value, itself the social form of surplus labour in capitalist production. This competition is the antithesis of a society-wide plan.

In contrast, under communism, resource allocation is done *a priori* and consciously throughout the whole society. The specific forms of labour are decided on and allocated concretely in this way. Consciousness is a defining feature of the plan and, therefore, increasingly of society as it progresses towards communism. The contradiction between individual, concrete labour and social, abstract labour is resolved as labour becomes both concrete and directly social, through its position in the plan.

The plan represents the conscious utilisation of social labour by society as a whole. Labour is allocated directly and concretely, unlike under the law of value which allocates labour indirectly and unconsciously, via the exchange of the products of labour.

Some 'Marxists', however, find it useful to conflate the two forms of labour, such as the state capitalist SWP: "Planning and competition are not opposing tendencies. Internally in large capitalist firms we do not find market prices or market competition, but instead administrative 'prices' and planning Under state capitalism, and generally under modern capitalism, the operation of the law of value is mediated through the attempt to plan" (Derek Howl, 'The law of value in

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the USSR', in *International Socialism* 49, December 1990, pp93-98).

Frankly, any firm 'plans' in this way, to a greater or lesser degree. But 'planning' of this kind must be based on prices, not labour times - unless Mr Howl's large firms have dispensed with workers, who generally get paid wages, the *price* of their labour power. Capitalist 'planning' is only done in order to realise profit via exchange. Planning under socialism is not. Capitalist 'inputs' and 'outputs' are only of interest to the capitalist in terms of their prices. The realisation of profit, no matter how large the monopoly, can only be achieved through the anarchy of the market. Although both laws function under socialism, the plan functions only insofar as it negates value, not fuses with it. Howl's *conceptual* fusing of the two enables him to equate two fundamentally different societies.

Engels wrote in *Anti-Dühring*: "Only a society which enables its productive forces to mesh harmoniously on the basis of one single vast plan can allow industry to be dispersed over the whole country in the way best adapted to its own development and to the maintenance and development of the other elements of production" (p385).

This can only be done in a full way on a world scale. So long as the antagonistic world division of labour created by capitalism exists, the full transition to communism is not a possibility.

Under socialism, to a large degree value and plan can be distinguished only conceptually, with all sectors of production combining elements of both laws. For instance, in a highly planned economy, workers still draw a wage, exchanging their labour power for the 'universal equivalent', the representation of value as money; even though it is paid by their own state and is not determined by 'market forces' it is still the sale of labour power. The situation is further complicated by the fact that money only functions *in part* as a universal equivalent, since much of the economy is excluded from commodity production. Under the transition period the wage form therefore exists as a hybrid of capitalism and communism. Both laws act within the one economy, counterposed to one another. Consequently, neither law appears in its pure form.

If this is true, then it follows that neither law functions to the full extent. The law of value is *partially* abolished as it can only fully exist in a *capitalist* commodity economy. Yet the form of society which succeeds it cannot come into its own while the former exists. This is especially true as socialism has no inherent technological superiority over capitalism, or existing economic basis to confront it, as capitalism had over feudalism. Distortions in society, the strength of value and weakness of the plan, will therefore be more prevalent the more backward and isolated the country that undergoes socialist revolution.

This tells us far more about the material roots of the crisis of bureaucratic socialism than all the bourgeois moralising about competition being in 'human nature' and the consequent 'natural' and inherent superiority of the market economy.

In the transition period these two fundamental and antithetical social laws of value and plan are in conflict with each other. Preobrazhensky used the analogy, in his 1921 pamphlet *From NEP to Socialism*, of two inverted pyramids, representing the law of value and the law of the plan, growing upwards. Eventually they come into irreconcilable conflict. One must topple the other.

The law of value cannot just be abolished in the transition period, or ignored. It represents the continuation of objective social laws, carried over from capitalist society, that we must fight to overcome. It is maintained by the continuing existence of scarcity and the social division of labour. Value and plan are *combined* in the transition period. This is a stage that cannot be leaped. But such a combination is one of antagonistic social laws.

Conscious and unconscious social regulation are counterposed in the struggle of these two laws. Insofar as we master the law of value we negate it, as its operation is a manifestation of social power *outside* of conscious regulation. Its control is nothing other than its death from the encroachment of the plan. This can only be achieved as humanity takes conscious control over its own development in total. The law of value, like the state, will wither away as world humanity moves towards communism.

because of our criticisms of Stalin. Others denounce Stalin while retaining his method (eg, ironically, revisionists from Khrushchev onwards).

Many of the mistaken concepts of *Economic Problems* are carried over by the left today, although often unconsciously. One example is Stalin's mechanical equation of natural science with Marxist social science. For instance: "Some comrades deny the objective character of the laws of science, and of the laws of political economy in particular, under socialism. They deny that the laws of political economy reflect the law governed processes which operate independently of the will of man" (*The Essential Stalin*, p445). Later on, he argues that "the laws of political economy under socialism are objective laws, which reflect the fact that the processes of economic life are law governed and operate independently of our will" (*Ibid*, pp450-1).

The point is not to dispute the objective character of economic laws, let alone those of the natural sciences. But by phrasing the problem in the way he does, Stalin blurs the necessity of understanding different economic laws both as distinct from natural laws and in their historic specificity. The inference is that economic laws exist external to society, like natural laws, rather than as the manifestation of relations between classes.

In doing so, he relegates the role of consciousness to a (very) secondary factor under all conditions. He takes an ahistoric view of the fetishistic relations of production under capitalism and transposes them onto socialism. Consciousness is viewed with the operation of the plan, as with value, as being an external *influence* rather than the *determinant* factor. Like an external natural law, such a social law can only be *influenced*. So, although elsewhere Stalin writes of the historically transient nature of "the laws of political economy", there is no place in his schema to explain how the law of value can be so transient. He argues (incorrectly) that it can be done by resolving the contradiction between what he terms the two forms of socialist property, state and cooperative. Yet this supposed route to value's negation stands in stark contradiction to the dominant theme that the law of value can only be "influenced". In his hands the vital understanding of the historic specificity of social laws becomes an 'orthodox' proviso.

Stalin's method is 'technicist', in that he equates social phenomena, the product of human activity, with natural phenomena. For him, *social* relations of production are both confused with and taken as secondary to *technical* relations. The development of the technical relations of productive forces at the 'base' of society bring it into contradiction with the less dynamic social relations (which Stalin effectively limits to relations of distribution). The motive social force is its correspondence, or lack of, with the technological 'base'. The technical 'base' is taken as primary.

This is laid out clearly in Stalin's essay *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* of 1938: "First the productive forces of society change and develop, and then, depending on these changes and in conformity with them, men's relations of production, their economic relations, change ... Therefore, however much the relations of production may lag behind the development of the productive forces, they must, sooner or later, come into correspondence with - and actually do come into correspondence with - the level of development of the productive forces" (*Ibid*, p321).

On the face of it, this resembles Marx's 1859 preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, ie, "men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production ... From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution. The changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure" (pp20-21).

Now, the *Preface* itself was written before Marx had fully developed his critique of political economy, as presented in *Capital*. As yet, there was no clear distinction between labour and labour power. There was still a tendency to see capitalist crisis as produced by the contradiction between production and circulation rather than, as in *Capital*, within the production process itself, of which circulation is a moment. However, there is still a distinct difference between the approaches of the 1859 Marx and Stalin.

As Marx writes, it is changes from *within* the economic foundation which act as the spur. Marx, whether writing in 1859 or 1867, is clear that relations of production are social relations: the "totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society" (*Ibid*, p20).

For Marx, the contradiction propelling development was a truly internal and dialectical one; a contradiction inherent within the social relations of production themselves. In capitalism, this is in essence between use value and value. Although this does indeed presuppose, and is bound up with, a certain level of development of the productive forces, it is the social relations of production which propel this forward, compelling further development.

Stalin's method led him to (or, rather, allowed him to justify) statements on the positive regulatory nature of the law of value, defined by technical relations of production. Many post-Stalin revisionists (Dobb, Althusser) follow the logic of this, see-

ing the law of value as being as permanent as the physical production process itself. There is no other conclusion to be drawn from this method.

The growth of consciousness in the transition period is only given importance in the same sense that a mechanic can fine tune a car that s/he has been presented with.

The plan is precisely conscious regulation of production: whereas the law of value works independently of our consciousness, the plan can only work through it. The transition to communism represents the reappropriation of social power under conscious social control, the dialectical synthesis of social action and consciousness.

Of course, there will remain physical and technical limitations; the level of development of productive forces may not allow society to make enough of something that is required. But these are physical constraints, not inherently social ones. The constraints that are imposed on production in the capitalist world today are inherently social, whether they be bankruptcy, recession, famine or waste and destruction through war.

In anticipation of today's 'market socialists', Stalin argues with regard to the Soviet Union, "our enterprises cannot, and must not, function without taking the law of value into account. Is this a good thing? It is not a bad thing. Under present conditions, it really is not a bad thing, since it teaches our business executives to conduct production on rational lines and disciplines them. It is not a bad thing because it teaches our executives to count production magnitudes, to count them accurately, and also to count the real things in production precisely, and not to talk nonsense about 'approximate figures', spun out of thin air. It is not a bad thing because it teaches our executives to look for, find and utilise hidden reserves latent in production, and not to trample them underfoot" (*Economic Problems*, in *The Essential Stalin*, p459).

But to allocate resources rationally, one must be able to calculate resources concretely. Only the plan can do this. Stalin confuses concrete labour time with abstract labour time. The law of value transforms individual labour times in an unrecognisable way, through the price form.

Engels makes this point with stark clarity: "Since direct social production and direct distribution preclude any exchange of commodities, they also preclude the transformation of the products into commodities ... and consequently into values as well.

"From the moment society enters into possession of the means of production and uses them in direct association of production, the labour of each individual, however varied its specifically useful character, becomes social labour straight away and directly. The quantity of social labour contained in a product need not then be first established in a roundabout way; daily experience will show in a direct way how much is required on the average ... Hence, on the above assumptions, society will not assign values to products" (*Anti-Dühring*, pp401-2).

But Stalin's position is not just an innocent 'Ricardian' error. His pamphlet is a justification for the situation in the Soviet Union. Because there was a substitution of command planning by a bureaucracy for the democratic plan, society could not plan in a rational and conscious manner. Therefore, the absence of social consciousness determining the plan, justified by Stalin, was to a large extent true within the Soviet Union.

Marx pointed out that the bourgeoisie produced apologists, not theorists. The same became increasingly true of the Soviet bureaucracy. Stalin articulated, whether consciously or not, the interests of that bureaucracy, under the guise of championing the working class. One aspect of these interests was to withhold *direct* power from the working class, ie, control over the plan. But without such control all the bureaucracy itself was able to do was to 'influence' the plan's operation, over which it was unable to exert its own complete control.

By dominating the plan in its sectional interests, the bureaucracy ensured that it could not function in a full way. In other words, it could not be controlled effectively (see 'Bureaucratic Socialism', below). Social relations thus remained mystified, though by different processes than under capitalism. The position of the bourgeoisie under capitalism and the dominant caste under bureaucratic socialism was therefore loosely analogous in respect of their ability to rationally direct social production. But this should not lead us to conclude, like Stalin, that the laws of value and plan are so analogous.

Stalin's most dangerous mistake was to argue that the Soviet Union could overcome the contradictions it faced through the development of production and collectivisation on a national scale. That is, that communism can be achieved within one country. This, for which Stalin laid the theoretical basis in *Foundations of Leninism* in 1924, is a fundamental departure from Marxism. Capitalism develops the world economy and, hence, the world division of labour. But capitalism cannot utilise it. This poses the necessity to transcend it on a world scale: to plan on the basis of the world commune. The plan can only really develop when it is able to utilise that world division of labour.

Economic Problems is a centrist document, com-

bining Marxist rhetoric with opportunist theory. As such, it is unsurprisingly fraught with contradiction. But opportunism has a logic. Stalin's technicist assumptions, the ahistoric aspects of his understanding of social laws, within the context of his isolationist strategy, have all reached fruition in the theories of the 'market socialists' and the practice of the restorationist 'official communists'.

'Market socialists'

On to a figure much less dramatic than Stalin: Ron Bellamy, editor of the Communist Party of Britain's *Communist Review*. In the *Morning Star* of September 1990 he was set the daunting task of acting as apologist for Gorbachev's restorationist (non) programme in the Soviet Union.

Given that events since August 1991 have so swiftly overtaken Bellamy, why bother with him? Bellamy is far from 'market socialism's' most eloquent exponent. Others, such as Alec Nove and the Polish economist Włodzimierz Brus, have made their names in this field, without paying the price of Bellamy's political prostitution to the Soviet bureaucracy.

But, as we shall see, the 'virtue' of Bellamy's three articles is that they summarise the essence of the 'market socialist' case. In the wake of the collapse of bureaucratic socialism, many other prominent leftists are being wooed by such theories. *New Left Review* editor Robin Blackburn coquettishly writes in a recent study, wondering whether "some of Marx's rhetoric now seems overly simple", and has "refused the tempting delusion of totally planned outcomes" ('Socialism After the Crash', in *After the Fall*, ed Robin Blackburn, pp233, 209). But where Blackburn eclectically hedges his bets, Bellamy plunges straight in.

The arguments of the 'market socialists' are used today, along with the experience of the collapse of bureaucratic socialism, by the bourgeoisie and academics as 'proof' of the untenability of a planned economy and therefore of a full rational control of world production - communism. Unfortunately, therefore, this opportunist argument has survived the Soviet workers' state that spawned it.

In his first article, Bellamy runs through a superficial analysis of petty commodity production. He looks on petty commodity production as the 'nice' market. Surplus value does not exist there, exploitation does not exist because labour power as a commodity does not exist. This, then, is 'fair' production and, therefore, perfectly applicable to socialism. Socialism, too, is nice and fair. 'Precapitalist - or 'petty' - commodity production is relevant because, like socialism, it contains no exploiters ... Because they are direct producers, they have intimate knowledge of the production process. Because they are owners, they have full control over it' (*Morning Star* September 10 1990).

In a stereotypical petty bourgeois fashion, Bellamy sees production as a purely individual action, rather than one which can only be understood, let alone controlled, socially. Engels anticipates Bellamy by a century in *Anti-Dühring*: "every society based on commodity production [note, not just capitalist production] has the peculiarity that the producers have lost command over their own social relations ... Thus they assert themselves without the producers and against the producers, as the natural laws of their form of production, working blindly. The product dominates the producers" (pp349-50). Is this the full control over the production process that Bellamy is so keen on?

Bellamy argues that socialism is a form of commodity production. This is in a sense true, but he does not develop that point. His view of socialism is static. Abolition of surplus value becomes the end point. Nothing is said about the struggle to negate the operation of the law of value itself. Like Stalin, Bellamy argues that it is 'a good thing' that it operates.

Even the most elementary understanding of materialism should tell us that this is wrong. Contradiction is the motive force of all phenomena, the key to their development. The basic contradiction of the law of value - and therefore of all commodity production - is that between value and use value. This is the basis for wage exploitation: the fact that the use value of labour for the purchaser is that it creates greater value than is needed to reproduce it, represented in the wage form. Surplus product has the social form of surplus value, appropriated by the capitalist class. Therefore, although the development of surplus value is absent in the relations of petty commodity production, it is latent within them, posed by them. Marx's *Capital* shows that the existence of the commodity relation, makes necessary the development of surplus value: "in bourgeois society the commodity form of the product of labour - or the value form of the commodity - is the economic cell form" (*Capital*, Vol I, p8). And further: "The mode of production in which the product takes the form of a commodity ... is the most general and most embryonic form of bourgeois production" (*Ibid*, p82).

This law can only be negated through a world plan of socialised production as society moves towards communism: "The life process of society, which is based on material production, does not strip off its mystical veil until it is treated as production by freely associated men, and is con-

Stalin's 'Economics'

The root of 'market socialist' justifications for the restorationist process can be traced back to past opportunist theories of the nature of socialism. One such example is Joseph Stalin's *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*, published in 1952, the year before he died. The pamphlet was attacked at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956, but was before highly acclaimed, and continued to be influential on socialist economists such as our Maurice Dobb and Ronald Meek.

Some communists, in attempting to defend the tradition of the October Revolution, look to Stalin as a bulwark against revisionists from Khrushchev onwards. For example, the Communist Labor Party of the United States of North America withdrew from cooperating on the *International Information Bulletin*

sciously regulated by them in accordance with a settled plan" (*Ibid*, p80).

All the 'market socialists' to one degree or another argue against this plan, certainly as the sole regulator of production. Modern society is much too complex to plan, you see. This was argued by the prominent 'market socialist' Alec Nove in a debate reprinted in the SWP's *Socialist Review* (December 1991): "There are only really two ways in which you can acquire [goods and services]. You can either buy them or you can apply for allocation. If you apply for an allocation you need an allocating bureaucracy. There is no third way. And if you have an allocating bureaucracy it develops interests and powers of its own ... The problem is not that the Soviet Union was undemocratic, but that the logic of centralised planning cannot produce an effective result and concentrates immense powers in the upper stratum of those who decide and allocate".

So the bureaucratic distortions we saw in the Soviet Union were an inevitable result of the domination of the plan. Nove caustically dismisses those of us who argue that democratic control will prevent this, asking "relative intensity of needs would be discovered how? By voting, by democracy? In other words if you think that you need more fur coats you form a fur coat party?"

Blackburn also opposes the "fallacy of the single mind" in planning, pointing out the "planner's ignorance" as a result of the "dispersal of knowledge" throughout society (Blackburn, in *After the Fall* pp206-7). All this was a real problem under bureaucratic socialism.

The way that a plan should exist, how Marx envisaged it, is very different from what we have seen in the socialist and ex-socialist countries, ie what has been called command planning. This has now been equated, by the bourgeoisie and 'market socialists' alike, with planning in a general sense.

The basis for such a plan grows out of capitalist society itself; not just from its vast concentration of production, but from the *collective* struggle of the proletariat for its self emancipation. The plan, freed from its bureaucratic distortion, is the rational administration of society by society. It breaks down the barriers between producer and consumer, the general and particular in production. Individuals decide on the implementation of the plan, both in terms of their own particular element of it and the plan as a whole. It is the voluntary association of producers. So we are not dealing with Blackburn's single mind. This is a plan of the social totality, by the social totality. "Dispersed knowledge" is collectivised, the individual "planner's ignorance" subsumed within a whole that is thus greater than its parts.

Planning - direct association - should therefore be more straightforward than indirect association of the market. The coordination of needs and resources throughout society is far from impossible in a world of internationalised production and microcomputers. Of course, Nove can justifiably point out immense problems in coordinating a world economy rationally. The world is, after all, a big complicated place. Yet in effect, all that he can offer in return is to paper over the cracks with the *irrational*, spontaneous coordination of the market - with, of course, moralistic warnings about letting the latter get out of hand.

The plan *co-ordinated* at the centre, not bureaucratically *dominated* by it, as we have seen hitherto, is perfectly feasible. The centre collects, collates and makes accessible information drawn from society, to feed it back so that decisions are made within society, by the producers themselves.

Democracy prevents the consolidation of the bureaucratic elite that Nove warns of. The absence of such democracy was precisely the problem in the Soviet Union. Why is this so complex an idea that it passes our professor by?

Others who put more of an emphasis on the 'socialist' aspect of 'market socialism' concoct various checks and balances to control the excesses of the market and/or state bureaucracy, perhaps in answer to Nove's rhetorical questions: "The key to democratic social direction of economic activity is an ongoing interaction between state institutions (regulated by elections); production units (internally democratised); individual citizens exercising social supervision through users' committees, community directorships, etc; and a wide variety of campaigning and activist groups expressing a variety of community needs and interests" (Diane Elson, 'The Economics of the Socialised Market', in Blackburn *After the Fall* p312).

This is a bit like reinventing the classical simplicity of the wheel - as a hexagon. If, instead of drawing up intricate utopias in our heads, we look to the lessons of the workers' struggles (the basis of socialism) we can find our hideously complex set of committees and ginger groups rolled into one - call it a soviet, workers' council or what you will. But there is one important difference: this is not a check on the state, it is the state. More correctly, it is a semi-state, the phrase that Marx used for the Paris Commune of 1871.

As society moves from scarcity to abundance, the necessity for these specialists, and hence control over them, gradually disappears. The administration of people increasingly becomes the administration of things.

So back to Bellamy's plan for the new world on the basis of petty commodity relations. It goes as

follows: "autonomy can be achieved and controlled through the 'lease' of social property by the centre to the work collectives to use as their own ... Lessees have the right to decide what they produce ... and how to produce it. This means that also they decide from whom to get their inputs, and to whom to dispose of their outputs. Since others are doing the same, the exchange relations between producers and consumers of all products become relations between buyers and sellers - that is, market relations" (*Morning Star* September 11 1990).

This is reiterated more obliquely by Elson: "enterprises would be leased to groups of operators for a fixed period and leases would only be renewed to groups which satisfied certain social performance criteria" (in *After the Fall* p312).

Again, Bellamy contends that these producers have a real decision as to whom they sell to and buy from. This is false. The market represents blind social forces; Adam Smith's invisible hand. You 'decide' from whom to buy, and at what price (though not to whom) to sell under the harsh lash of the necessity to compete. This need to compete will destroy the plan within socialism. Different areas of the plan will develop, through the necessity of accumulation, into different centres of capital. In other words, a return to capitalism. This was apparent from the way that the Soviet plan began to fragment along national lines between 1989 and August 1991, with the proto-bourgeoisies of different republics struggling to create and defend national markets. August represented the breaking point of the counter-tendency of the bureaucratic plan.

'Market socialism' is an idealised version of capitalism. It echoes Proudhon, the French father of anarchism who argued in defence of the commodity economy but without its evils. In polemics that could equally be directed towards the 'market socialists', Marx demolished such illusions. He attacked "the foolishness of those socialists ... who maintain that exchange and exchange value etc are originally (in time) or essentially (in their adequate form) a system of universal freedom and equality, but have been perverted by money, capital, etc". Marx answered that the equalities of "exchange value or, more precisely, the money system" by their very nature "turn out to be inequality and unfreedom". This is the result of the very nature of the commodity form, from petty commodity production on, where "private property in the product of one's own labour is identical with the separation of labour and property, so that labour will create alien property and property will command alien labour" (*Grunder*, quoted in R Rosdolsky *The Making of Marx's Capital* pp181-2).

Bellamy blithely skips over the existence of the wage form under socialism as being no problem. Of course he does not explain what wages are: the price of labour power, the representation of labour power as a commodity. The existence of the wage form under the transition to communism still represents alienated labour, even if it is alienated to the worker's own state, and thus the existence of alienation under socialism (this has been compounded by the bureaucratic form of the workers' state under hitherto existing socialism). But the wage which Bellamy envisages is not the price of labour power sold to the worker's own state, acting to negate the commodity economy, but sold to autonomous enterprises which rely on the existence of such an economy for their existence. Already, and despite himself, Bellamy has taken us out of simple commodity production into full blown capitalism, which Marx defined as generalised commodity production to the point at which labour itself becomes a commodity.

There are further fundamental flaws in this petty commodity production/socialism model. Marx used the former to illustrate the social relations underpinning exchange, to show how the contradictions within the commodity form necessarily led to the full development of capitalism. The development of such relations forced forward the primary, or primitive, accumulation of capital. Petty commodity production belongs to that period of history where artisans worked with the simple tools of their trade, before the massive accumulation of 'dead' labour that launched the world into its domination by capital. Now, I may be simplistic here, but I really do not see integrated steel and car plants as the tools of the artisan's trade. In the context of the socialist plan they represent socialist industry. Put within the context of the market they become vast concentrations of capital. Subordinate to such relations they must develop within them the poles of capitalist and proletarian. Through exchange they will establish an average (tendentially falling) rate of profit, the relation of surplus value and a new capitalist class.

The whole logic of the 'market socialist' argument takes them from the problems of the class they are attempting to theorise. This is well illustrated in Bellamy's September 12 1990 article: "Socialists have always pointed out one of the dilemmas of capitalism. Capitalism has developed through large scale production concentrated in large scale enterprises. But by the same token, it has created conditions for monopoly. We want to keep the former, we do not want the latter."

What Bellamy reflects here is not the interests of the working class. As Lenin explained in *Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism*, monopoly capital - moribund capital - represents capitalism that is

over-ripe for revolution, ready for appropriation by the working class. Indeed, Lenin argued, "socialism is merely the next step forward from state-capitalist monopoly. Or, in other words, socialism is merely state-capitalist monopoly which is made to serve the interests of the whole people and has to that extent ceased to be capitalist monopoly" (quoted in *Living Socialism*, p96).

Capitalist industry in Russia in 1917, although not as predominant as in the west, had one of the highest degrees of concentration and monopolisation. Monopoly capital shows us that contradictions within society have reached a high degree of development. It is a new society straining to be born. Centralised industry as developed at the imperialist stage is far easier for the proletariat to lay hands on in the revolution than a myriad disparate capitals. Capital here has already done some of the groundwork for us in coordinating large scale production. It makes it easier for the working class as the ruling class to fuse production into what Engels called "one single vast plan". More, in doing so imperialism creates the conditions for its downfall, heightening the contradictions of capitalism.

That does not mean we support imperialist expansion, but we recognise that what Marx and Engels pointed out in the *Communist Manifesto* still applies under imperialism; capital continually revolutionises production.

In attempting to drag history backwards to small capital, Bellamy expresses the standpoint of the petty bourgeoisie. This stratum views with fear the threat that the encroachment of large capital poses to its existence. It is the mentality of the corner shop owner faced with Tesco's. His standpoint is also expressed in the programme of his organisation, the CPB's *British Road to Socialism*, particularly the strategy of the anti-monopoly alliance. This is no strategy for socialism, neither its attainment in the capitalist countries nor its development in the (now largely ex) socialist countries. Rather it is a utopian blueprint for a return to a mythical small pre-monopoly capitalism. In other words, it is reactionary.

The problem which he shares with the rest of the 'market socialists' is that socialism is taken as a finished thing. In rejecting the transcendence of the market by the plan, they reject the necessity (or even the possibility) of communism. At best, Blackburn is an agnostic on this question. For the 'market socialists', having written off the development of communism, eventually there is nowhere left to go but back to capitalism.

Bureaucratic socialism

To tackle today's 'market socialist' theories it is necessary to analyse and understand the material conditions that have given them influence: the crisis that has swept the socialist world.

First, it is vital to understand the development of the socialist states within the context of the world revolution. The revolutions in Russia, China and elsewhere occurred in relatively backward weak links in the imperialist chain. Socialism was built in disadvantageous conditions, cut off from being able to utilise the world division of labour and holding a subordinate position in a world economy dominated by imperialism.

Given where socialism developed, it should be no surprise that it has suffered gross distortions from its very beginning. Marx, in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* wrote, "What we have to deal with here is a communist society, not as it has developed on its own foundations, but, on the contrary, as it emerges from capitalist society; which is thus in every respect, economically, morally and intellectually, still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges" (p11).

The Soviet Union was the most important of the socialist states. It was the world revolutionary centre - the country where the class struggle had reached its highest point. As the world's first and most powerful socialist state the Soviet Union has shown the development of the problems of hitherto existing socialism most clearly.

Socialism in Russia was characterised by extreme backwardness, where the working class made up a small minority of the population. That class had been dispersed, and its most class conscious section decimated, by the Civil War. Contrary to the fervent hopes of the Bolsheviks, the European revolution was thrown into retreat, leaving the Russian workers' state under siege. Production was in a state of collapse, with industry not even able to renew its aging and decaying fixed factors of production. By 1921, society was on the brink of collapse. One writer estimated that at this time it had a level of production commensurate with Cromwellian England. Under such conditions, socialism was bound to suffer from distortions, principally the substitution of bureaucracy for the active participation of what was by then an exhausted working class. Lenin at the end of the Civil War warned that the soviets had become rubber stamp bodies for the Party, and that the dictatorship of the proletariat rested on a couple of thousand Bolshevik cadre. This, in a country of some 170 million people.

Reading Preobrazhensky, writing in 1927, it seems that things had not qualitatively improved. "By and large we should have, as we had in fact in

1925, an operation of the law of value not carried through to completion and therefore quite deformed and distorted, because this law is capable of bringing about an increase in retail prices but incapable of causing, through an increase in retail prices, a redistribution of the country's productive forces in the direction of a more rapid industrialisation. To use a physiological analogy, we should have an *inhibitive reflex of the law of value* which did not pass from the sphere of distribution to the sphere of production" (*New Economics*, pp177-8).

The law of value was crippled by its incomplete functioning. It could not act, even in the anarchic way it does under capitalism, to distribute social labour and its products.

The plan also developed in such a distorted and ineffective manner. This was because it was cut off from the active participation of the working masses; first, inevitably, because of the destructive effects of civil war, famine and social collapse, and then through the maintenance of caste privileges by the emergent bureaucracy which came to dominate the workers' state under Stalin. The two are not unrelated features, both being rooted in the backwardness and isolation of that society.

The factor which has the most significance during this period is that of bureaucracy. Towards the end of his life Lenin had begun to focus on the danger of its growth. Whether or not he would have been able to check this had he lived is too large an 'if' to bother considering here. The bureaucracy not only grew, but came to dominate both Party and state by the late 1920s. As touched on above in the 'Stalin' section, this not only had political repercussions, but also began to reproduce a distortion of the plan, breaking it up into atomised elements through the prism of the bureaucracy.

To hold on to its privilege, as with the trade union bureaucracy under capitalism this caste had to ensure the mass of the working class could have no effective control. In restricting - and at times totally eradicating - democracy, the operation of the plan was undermined. This method of 'command planning' has been the Soviet norm in essence since 1928-9; the period of the initiation of the first Five Year Plan.

Although this saw Soviet society move into overdrive, creating a basis for heavy industry and large scale agriculture, it did so in a very contradictory fashion. It is necessary to look at this period to understand how the same form of planning was recently brought to the point of collapse and beyond.

During the period of the New Economic Policy of 1921-8 living standards for the working class rose sharply. However, for the mass of poor peasantry it fell. Stresses increased between town and country: industrial production lagged behind agricultural production, providing the peasants with little incentive to trade. Inflation rocketed. Class differentiation in the countryside accelerated, strengthening the kulaks at the expense of the majority of poor peasants. Development could not, as the Bolshevik Nikolai Bukharin suggested in the 1920s, proceed at the speed of the peasant's nag. Stresses were becoming more serious, threatening both economic breakdown and the basis of the worker peasant alliance. This was resolved by the enforced collectivisation and industrialisation of the first Five Year Plan.

This was a period that we can term primitive socialist accumulation. The late 1920s and early 30s saw a precipitous decline in the living standards of the working class. Some, such as the Socialist Workers Party, have used this to empirically 'prove' that with the first Five Year Plan the Soviet Union became a state capitalist society, based on "accumulation for the sake of accumulation" (Howl, in *International Socialism* p96).

However, Preobrazhensky, writing shortly before collectivisation, and pushing for its implementation from a revolutionary position, stated: "the outward worsening of the lives of the working masses in the period of primitive socialist accumulation, in comparison to the position of the workers in the developed capitalist system, argues as little for the economic superiority of capitalism over socialism as the worsening of the position of the workers in the first capitalist manufactories and factories, as compared with the crafts, could argue for the economic superiority of independent production over capitalist production" (*New Economics* p114). To survive, it was necessary for the Soviet state to channel accumulation into the primary industries. Until this was accomplished, creating a basis for the construction of secondary, consumption orientated, industry, it was inevitable that the working masses would pay a price for this. This was especially true of the backward Soviet state, where this industrial base was initially extremely weak.

But not only did the material situation of the masses regress; their ability to exercise control over the process of production was reduced. Although this period saw the eradication of the neo-bourgeois Nepmen and the policy of 'liquidation of the kulaks as a class', factory structures became more hierarchical, Stakhanovism created intense competition within the working class, internal passports restricted (albeit ineffectively) the movement of workers. The pressure of absolute scarcity held the working class in check. The bureaucracy was able to consolidate its hold; not as any new class, but as an outgrowth of the working class, pulling control of the state around it.

SUPPLEMENT

self, unhindered by a coherent challenge from a working class organised to defend its own position. Where the working class did resist, it was in an atomised fashion, through individual inefficient work. It was not given any collective, conscious orientation.

Because this control was incomplete, it was also inefficient. Lenin, in *Better Fewer, But Better*, his last essay, warned against the tendencies towards quantitative growth at the expense of quality. The late 1920s were to see such tendencies become the norm. This could be seen from the way in which the first Five Year Plan was realised.

One Soviet communist, Christian Rakovsky, writing on the initial result of the first plan in 1931, provides us with a unique and detailed interpretation of this, produced from Soviet state statistics (translated in *Critique No 13*). State planning agencies gave an overall figure of growth of 27.4% in the year. Phenomenal by any standards, when analysed concretely, real growth was substantially less. Rakovsky draws up a table showing the percentage of defective goods produced from a sample of six average Soviet industrial plants. Defective goods from the five functioning plants was at 35%. If the non-functioning plant is added, the figure goes up to 46% defective goods. All areas of the plan suffered similar sharp growth in wastage. Coordination between different sections of the plan was poor to say the least. By 1930, lack of resources had brought three quarters of electrification projects to a halt.

This became reproduced as totals for physical output, which meant little in reality, were forwarded to the state planning agency to draw up targets for the next period. Rakovsky set down some major points as follows: "The official figures for quantitative growth are a fiction, because they have failed to take into account the quality of output. Once we take quality into account the quantitative figures become relative ... To the extent that there really has been quantitative growth, the decisive factors have been the more intensive employment of the workforce and the greater intensity of labour" (p14). Further pursuit of this method, warned Rakovsky, would have disastrous results. Why was such a policy carried out?

Because the plan was all top down control, there being no reciprocal feedback or adequate 'horizontal' coordination, a very unresponsive set of relations developed. This could not have occurred with full interaction at all levels. But such interaction necessitated an extension of democracy; otherwise 'graft' takes over, with everyone at every level looking after their own patch and providing fictional information that would guarantee this. More importantly, lack of control produces lack of identification. Why work for the development of a system you are alienated from?

One of the results which this has always produced in the (ex) socialist economies is poor quality. This is also related to the nature of the plan. Plan targets are allocated in the same manner, essentially based on physical output at all levels; individual, work team, factory, district, etc. Such targets were passed down and broken up from the state planning agency outwards. Overfulfilling targets are linked to bonuses. What each section of the plan is directed to is maximum physical output, in isolation from the needs of society. What tends to be produced is crap.

One example is TV manufacture. Ever wonder why Japanese, not Soviet, firms dominate the market? Quality is extraordinarily low, especially towards the end of the Five Year Plan, when there is a rush to fulfill and overfulfill quotas. Whether it works or not is beside the point as far as the producer is concerned. What counts is that a TV rolls off the production line and an extra mark goes on output. This is compounded by the low level of technology employed in Soviet industry, both in the fixed and circulating factors of production. By the same logic, they too are badly produced.

Another example from a few years back, highlighted in the Soviet press, was the way in which a plant producing industrial cable met its target. Faced with unreliable raw supplies on the one hand and the necessity for high production if the plan was to be met on the other, an ingenious approach was adopted. Output was calculated in length of cable. So the way to hit target was to *reduce the diameter*. This was done and the plan fulfilled. The only problem was that the cable was now useless for the purpose for which it was intended.

In such a disjointed plan, physical output at each level is the motive force. In anticipation of raised plan targets, managers would hoard material and labour, as the plan itself was too atomised to respond quickly to an increased target with increased resources. An approach of this kind only increased the atomisation of production.

Where quality control was attempted, it led to further disorganisation. Resources were channelled from other areas of the plan, adversely affecting them. Often, within the area under development itself, this process was resisted because it was seen as hitting productivity bonuses, sometimes through resistance to new machinery.

Andropov estimated that one third of labour time in Soviet production was wasted. This occurred, not because of laziness or alcoholism, as Gorbachev likes to believe (though alienation of Soviet workers is high), but through the very form of the plan itself. Such wastage and inefficiency could only be compounded by the 10% fall in Soviet GNP in the eco-

nomic year of 1990-1.

Production of absolute surplus characterised Soviet planning of the pre-World War II period. With the growth in labour productivity, and without the spur of dire scarcity, this is no longer so much the case, although such growth has been far more sluggish than in the capitalist countries. Growth in labour productivity itself has also declined over recent years, from 5.7% between 1966-70, to 3.2% between 1981-5 in industry.

On the other hand, in a capitalist society, values produced must also have a use value. It is common sense (if not always true) that commodities with a greater use value will tend to sell better than those with a lesser use value. This market rationale is something that Gorbachev attempted, in a gradualist fashion, to inject into the Soviet economy, via Adam Smith's invisible hand of the market. The August counterrevolution has unfettered this process.

Bureaucratic socialism could not use the market to its advantage within the context of the planned economy. Here we come back to Preobrazhensky's "inhibited reflex of the law of value". What dictates production is not the valorisation of individual competing capitals, with the law of value dictating social distribution through the market. The continuing existence of a production unit in the bureaucratic plan bears no relation to that of a firm under capitalism, which must expand its capital through its realisation on the market. At each level in the bureaucratic plan, production exists as if for its own sake, irrespective of its eventual use. How could it be otherwise, given the absurd atomisation resulting from the absence of reciprocal democratic coordination? Even the most detailed plans on paper cannot be implemented effectively, when at each level production is adapted to the needs of those at that level.

This form of production yields a very low productivity of labour, which becomes exacerbated the more complex and developed the economy becomes.

In transforming social relations of production Marx argued that socialism would raise the productivity of labour beyond what was possible under capitalism. Fundamentally, this is an international development, proceeding with the extension of the world revolution. Yet, even within its own national terms of reference, the Soviet Union has shown less and less ability to do this.

Under Stalin, in the period of primitive socialist accumulation, growth rates seemed to expand exponentially. This was particularly characteristic of heavy industry: iron, steel, cement, etc. Here, the bureaucratic form of the plan was able to show its advantages: resources could be marshalled and concentrated on different areas of production. The transport and power networks and heavy industry were constructed in this way. The bureaucratic plan was able to take effect in the form of extensive growth, albeit at a lower productivity of labour and a higher degree of wastage than existed in the west. Low individual labour productivity was offset by rapid proletarianisation of peasants and the high intensity of labour.

Low quality did not just depress effective labour productivity within the area concerned with any one goods production. It had a society wide effect, for instance where goods were produced for production, not direct consumption. Also, a vast number of Soviet workers had to be drawn into the areas of repair and maintenance because of the poor quality. Andrew Smith, in *I was a Soviet Worker*, wrote, with regard to the position in 1932-4, that "we spend more time overhauling and repairing inefficient machines than it would take to make new ones".

However, as production develops, intensive development comes more to the fore. It is possible to throw resources into cement production with inefficient economy-wide coordination and a focus on quantity, and produce a massive amount of usable cement. The same method cannot be applied to the production of semi-conductors, computers, etc. In theory, the Soviet Union was always supposed to be ahead of the US in computer technology in the 1950s. That may well have been true, but the Soviet Union fell way, way behind. This is because of its economy's inability to produce such things. To do so necessitates quality and precise resource allocation. Where this has been attempted in the Soviet Union, it has detracted from other areas of the plan. Apart from the fact that quality controls are resisted because they effect quantity bonuses, introducing it in one sector of the economy immediately puts it even further out of kilter with the rest. Prioritising one industry's access to necessary resources causes a breakdown in other industries, because they fall lower down on the scale of allocation of resources.

Attempts at rationalising one area of production through prioritised command planning has historically always produced increased disorder within the rest of the plan. Production atomises. Developments in one sphere of industry rarely fed back throughout society. As an example, whereas the US space programme produced all sorts of developments, from missile guidance systems to teflon and velcro, the adventurous and innovative Soviet programme has yielded little outside of the military sphere.

Although the bureaucratic plan was able to boost extensive production massively in the past, particularly through intensive labour, it has never been able to effectively utilise this.

This produced ever declining growth rates. From the late 1920s onwards, with the exception of the period of World War II, Soviet production growth was

always ahead of that of the US, even by CIA figures. Yet in the post war period relative decline set in. From the mid 1970s the Soviet economy went into a nosedive, producing a general crisis particular to bureaucratic socialism.

This was a world phenomenon, especially for those states that were close emulations of the Soviet model. Socialism, which relies on a world plan, because of its bureaucratic form cannot even effectively plan on the national level. Comecon was unable to fully integrate because it could not develop conscious planning to the level of economic intercourse necessary to draw its constituent states together. Hence every state had to have its own integrated steel plant, etc. As the economies became more complex, planning became increasingly difficult and arbitrary on a national and international level: the more complex coordination production demanded, the less able was the socialist world to come up to the mark. Atomisation at the level of international economics was translated into nationalist politics.

In the Gorbachev period, this led the bureaucracy to openly look to capitalist solutions to cohere and develop an economy which was lagging ever further behind the west. This tendency, because of the social laws which determine it, was forced towards a *qualitative* change back towards the anarchic, superficially 'independent' autonomy of the competition of different capitals: capitalist counterrevolution.

The state is a form of coercion inherited from capitalism, standing above society. If this is true even of the democratic 'semi-state' that Marx and Lenin envisaged, such features can only be reinforced by an undemocratic, bureaucratic state. In *The State and Revolution*, Lenin argued for the smashing of the state and the establishment of a Commune-type state, if the workers were not to "transfer the bureaucratic-military machine from one hand to another".

In effect, with the isolation of the revolution in backward Russia, and later other underdeveloped states, this is what happened. The workers' state did not wither away but expanded and ossified.

The bureaucracy's ability to exercise control independently of the formally ruling working class was expanded (although, as illustrated above, incomplete). In the Soviet Union, with the de-activation of the working class as a class for itself, from the mid 1980s a section of the bureaucracy attempted to transform its limited control over the economy into ownership through the agency of the state.

The armed bodies of men defending the bureaucratic plan in a bureaucratic fashion shifted to defending, and enhancing, the law of value within these societies. Their victory in this is nothing other than the victory of counterrevolution.

Conclusions

The growth of the bureaucracy's domination over society expressed itself in the social relations of production. Backwardness and inefficiency were no longer based solely in the isolation and technical backwardness of the workers' socialist state. The dominant source of backwardness was to be located socially, in the form in which the plan operated.

The bureaucracy was in the contradictory position of reproducing its existence through its domination of the plan, yet being unable to effectively control production (and, by implication, the surplus product) because such domination precludes systematic planning. The bureaucracy, as such, both relied on its control of socialised property and, through its control, undermined that very property. This Catch 22 situation has resolved itself today in the attempt of the bureaucracy to ensure its continuing domination of society by transforming itself into a ruling capitalist class: moving from partial control over production to full ownership of it.

For this bureaucratic caste there is no other choice. The dynamic of its own social laws rule out the possibility of retaining the status quo, or of returning to the halcyon days of Stalin. The moving hand writes, and having writ moves on...

The conservatives such as Ligachev to all intents and purposes accepted the plans for restoration. Their only 'alternative' has been to turn to Great Russian chauvinist tubthumping and threats of military intervention. The state emergency committee coup preceding Yeltsin's looked to Russian nationalism and appeals against anarchy, rather than to proletarian internationalism and working class power.

It was no longer possible to do a holding operation on the decaying bureaucratic plan for any time. The bureaucracy, as a dominant caste, had become moribund. It had reached the end of the road.

Neither could the bureaucracy, as a stratum of society, move towards real workers' democracy to develop the plan. To do this means to turn to the working class; to give them the opportunity of deciding whether they want to spend hours - sometimes years for goods like cars - queuing for substandard goods while their leaders are driven in Zils, lounge in country dachas and have privileged access to high quality (often western) goods.

No social group - other than the working class - consciously does away with itself. 'No demon cuts off its own claws', as Trotsky rather evocatively put it.

The bureaucratic form of the plan had come into irreconcilable contradiction with its essence. Bureaucratic socialism entered a general crisis unique to itself from the mid 1980s.

The 'leadership' of the socialist states such as Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union became the biggest threat to their existence. They could provide no solution in the interests of the working class. The working class no longer had any common ground, no matter how contradictory, with the bureaucratic caste. The bureaucracy had become an absolute fetter on society.

The only way the working class could assert its independent class interests within these societies was through a political revolution against that bureaucracy. With the counterrevolution victorious in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, workers there are now faced with the task of a new social revolution.

The guarantee of the success of the proletariat in these countries is not just its own efforts, the forging of its own genuine communist parties. It relies on the assistance of the world's working class, through making revolutions in all countries.

To do so, we must understand the weaknesses in our past efforts if we are to complete the task heralded by the roar of the Aurora's guns.

Alan Merrik

Unemployed ORGANISER

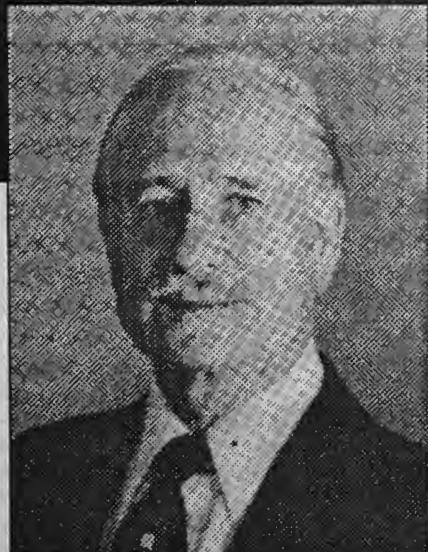
Paper of the Unemployed Workers Charter

MARCH!

Unemployed fightback

An open letter to the workers' organisations from Ernie Roberts, former Labour MP and retired Assistant General Secretary AEU, Honorary President of the Unemployed Workers Charter

**ASSEMBLE: SATURDAY
FEBRUARY 29, 12 noon AT
CLERKENWELL GREEN
MARCH :1pm TO RALLY IN
TRAfalgar Square**



Dear friends,

Millions of people, employed and unemployed, long to see the end of this vicious anti-working class Tory government. Now we have the opportunity to beat it at the polls. For over 12 years, the Tories have made our class pay in blood, sweat and tears for the crises they and their system have created. The millions of unemployed; the people waiting in pain in the long NHS waiting lists; the homeless haunting the streets of our cities; the low paid workers with large numbers of Black, women and young workers among them, struggling to survive on a few quid a week; these

people need a crushing defeat of the Tory vandals in the general election.

But we can't just sit back. Working people have a key active role in making sure that the Tories are well and truly

beaten. There are some in the working class movement who say that we must keep our heads down in the lead up to the election. These people have learned nothing from history. Every step forward the common people, their trade unions and the Labour Party have made has been as a result of struggle. We can never leave it



all to parliament to fight for our living standards and the Right to Work.

The Unemployed Workers Charter, of which I am Honorary President, has made a call for a national demonstration against unemployment on February 29 1992. A massive demonstration on the eve of a crucial general election could be the final blow in the defeat of the Tories. We must show them that we have suffered enough and declare the Tories redundant.

The demonstration will demand:

**An end to unemployment!
Work or full benefit!
Proper training at trade union rates
of pay!
Organise the unemployed!
House the homeless!**

Whoever wins the General Election - and I along with many others am working for a Labour victory - we still must make a stand and say enough is enough! We are not prepared to tolerate unemployment any longer. I am calling for all out backing from the Labour movement for this demonstration. The unemployed and those who have the threat of unemployment looming over them must demand to the incoming government that unemployment must be solved.

The misery of unemployment is not a "A Price Worth Paying". The time for action is now! Please let us know if you will act with us.

Yours in unity,
Ernie Roberts
Honorary President,
Unemployed Workers Charter

EDITORIAL

HOMELESSNESS has become the big issue for liberal guilt trippers this winter. One such is a certain Anita Roddick, owner of Body Shop. She has no doubt been disturbed by the amount of people sleeping on the streets she has to step over in her journeys between wine bar and roomy mansion. Doesn't your heart bleed?

Where most in her income bracket seem to favour water cannon to clear the homeless off the street, 'caring' Anita had another idea - one that would also boost her popularity among the trendy knit-your-own-muesli brigade who keep her 'caring' chain of shops going. Anita's big idea was *The Big Issue*: give homeless people a bundle of well designed, well financed newspapers to sell to guilt-stricken passers by. Then use 10p from each sale to finance 'vocational training' for the homeless.

This is patronising rubbish. Many thousands of people are sleeping on the street, not because they lack 'vocational training' or get-up-and-go but because the system we live under forces them into it.

If you are no longer profitable to employ, then you are forced onto the dole. Thousands, particularly youth, are forced beyond this: leaving home to look for work, unable to get finance for housing, they end up on the streets looking for a way out.

Let's face it, *The Big Issue* isn't going to provide any solutions. On the contrary, it is only going to exacerbate the situation. By posing the problem as being one of the individual inadequacy of the homeless, in typical 'Victorian values' style, we are presented with charity as being the solution.

The unemployed can do without their charity. Our answer - the answer of working class people threatened by homelessness and unemployment - is to organise to fight back against it. There are thousands of flats and houses - good ones - which are unoccupied because it isn't profitable for landowners to let them at rents our class can afford. How many spare rooms are there in Buckingham Palace for example?

Contrary to what we're told, no government or parliamentary Act will change this. The answer to the problems of our class comes from our class alone, not from parliament. This has been done in the past and has worked. If you are an individual, they can pick you off when it suits them, but, organised together, we can successfully fight back. The way we defeated the poll tax proved that.

The government is aware of this - it too has learnt lessons. Now it is threatening to make squatting a criminal offence. You will be a criminal for doing something about your basic human right for housing. But their laws need our mass consent if they are to work. Again, organisation is the key to defeat the state's attacks. If we combine together now - united like a fist - we can smash the ruling class' assault for their profits and put our class' needs to the fore.

On one thing, and one thing only, do we agree with the stated aims of *TBI* - the homeless and unemployed need their own publication. But it needs to be a paper that fights for our rights and organises us, not for appealing for sympathy from the middle class. Such a paper should be a weapon in the class war.

That weapon is *Unemployed Organiser*. Sell it and fight for its ideas. Don't be a victim - be the solution!

For the right to free housing!

Organise the homeless!

Organise defence against eviction!

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DEMONSTRATION

National Demonstration against Unemployment

ON FEBRUARY 29 1992, the Unemployed Workers Charter will take part in a National Demonstration against Unemployment.

The demonstration, initiated by the UWC, will be held in Central London, and will be seeking to highlight the fact that unemployment is at its highest levels since the 1930s, with all the attendant problems this brings to the majority of workers.

For too long, the government have been trying to persuade us that unemployment is a necessary 'evil' we have to bear, in order to secure the future 'prosperity' of Britain. What this means of course is the prosperity of the bosses, paid for by us. In a cynical attempt to try to show us that the unemployment figures are coming down, the government, over the past 12 years have continuously 'adjusted' (fiddled) the method of calculating the figures, no less than thirty odd times.

But enough is enough! The Unemployed Workers Charter is seeking to put the crime of unemployment back onto the top of the political agenda. We aim to show by example the necessity of the workers (both employed and unemployed) taking action to safeguard their livelihoods and interests. We want to stand on the shoulders of the National Unemployed Workers Movement of the 1920s and 30s, which organised several marches throughout that period of anything up to 100,000 people.

The demonstration is attracting support from many areas. Below we print some of the messages of support which have been received:

Jeremy Corbyn, Labour MP, Islington North:



"I am pleased to endorse the UWC's call for a national demonstration against unemployment on February 29, 1992.

"In a civilised society, there would be no need for unemployment. Yet in my own industry, we have seen in the last year a 48% drop in apprenticeships. At the same time, there is an immediate need for 1 and a quarter million new homes to be built for our people. Just take a walk through the streets of London one evening if you want to see the people who would benefit from such an initiative. There are an estimated 30,000 people now sleeping rough on the streets of the nation's capital; another 80,000 in cramped and squalid B&B accommodation.

"The construction industry could

The current mad rush to embrace the market economy throughout Europe is leading to higher unemployment throughout Eastern Europe, and the development of an underclass of extreme poverty throughout Western Europe.

The Maastricht Summit and the Government's proposals will lead to yet higher unemployment as multinational capital is put before the needs of workers."

Ron Brown, Labour MP, Leith:

"I support the National Demonstration against Unemployment in Central London, called for 29 February, 1992, because I believe it will serve as the spark to ignite the fight back by the working class.

"This fight back will be by the workers, both employed and unemployed, against the vicious and sustained attacks on our rights and bene-

fits over the last 12 years.

"We must demand the right to a job



for all, at trade union rates of pay, or else full maintenance.

This demonstration and all like-minded actions should be given full support and backing from the Labour movement, as it will be held on the eve of the next General Election."

train a million workers to banish this type of horror. The crime of homelessness, unemployment and the poverty that goes with it simply should not be tolerated in a civilised society.

"On a personal level, I had seven straight years of unemployment, mostly as a result of being blacklisted for my politics. I was fortunate however, to be class conscious enough not to turn in on myself or blame the people close to me. Through initiatives like the 1983 Peoples March for Jobs, I and thousands of others were given hope and dignity. This underlines the importance of protests like the National March Against Unemployment in 1992, on the eve of a vital general election for the working class."

Mark Fischer (National Organiser,



Unemployed Workers Charter: "This demonstration must be supported by all workers preparing to fight back against unemployment and the misery it bestows upon millions of people.

"During the 1920s and 1930s, the National Unemployed Workers Movement fought to organise not only the millions of unemployed throughout the country, but those employed workers who could be easily thrown onto the 'scrap-heap' by bosses taking on and paying lower wages to those out of work in an attempt to maximize their profits.

"Nothing's changed today. While the unemployed waste their lives searching for jobs that don't exist, the employed are threatened with the prospect of life on the dole should they no longer be needed for bosses' profits.

"The organisers of this march are working with the same fighting spirit of the NUWM. All workers, employed and unemployed must support this demonstration. Fight to end unemployment and fight for what our class needs - not what the system can afford!"

Opportunity knocks?

OPPORTUNITY 2000, the government's 'women's charter', may have been greeted with enthusiasm by the Tories, but working class women should have no illusions in its ability to improve their status within society.

Today, women make up 43% of the workforce. Forty percent of these are officially classified as low paid. They earn 30% less than male workers and many are employed on a part time basis, without any legal or trade union protection. Promoting a few into "positions of authority" will do nothing to end women's unequal status. It is just a cosmetic job directed at the middle classes.

The UWC demands that the gov-

ernment and industry provide 24 hour nurseries, free abortion and contraception on demand and the socialisation of housework.

Women should also, of course, be paid at the same rate as their male colleagues. By what is necessary to live on at today's standards, this should be a basic of £250 per week for a full time job. These demands will release women from the burden of childcare and domestic responsibilities and allow them to work on an equal basis along side their male counterparts. This isn't just a 'nice idea', but what is necessary for women to start to work in society on an equal footing.

Lessons from the lobby: Build the national demonstration

ON AUGUST 31 a group of unemployed and employed comrades made their way up to Glasgow to begin work leading up to the UWC's lobby of the TUC. The lobby was held in response to the betrayal of unemployed workers by the TUC in their collaboration with the Tory slave labour schemes, ET and YT. If they won't fight for the rights of unemployed and employed workers they should move out of the way for those who will.

During a weekend of street work the demands of the UWC were met with enthusiasm from both employed and unemployed workers. A fight of both unemployed and employed workers.

The employed face cuts in pay, short cuts on safety and conditions at work under the threat of unemployment. The fight for real jobs with real pay is a united struggle for all workers. These 'training schemes' on which workers are employed as dogs-bodies, without adequate supervision or anything approaching real pay and after six months are then thrown back on to the rubbish heap of capitalist society cannot be accepted by our class.

The weekend emphasised how important it is for unemployed workers to build an organisation which unites us in our common burden of unemployment, fights against the attacks on our life, and fights against the lie that the unemployed are the lazy useless dregs of society. It is vital that the unemployed refuse any longer to be used as the scapegoats and victims of the system that creates the monster of unemployment. Only by fighting back and taking our fight to the workplaces can we find the dignity and strength to demand what we need, not what the system can afford.

The need for a fighting organisation is clear, the reality a lot further away. The bitterness towards the government and the TUC in Glasgow was real enough, but this was not translated into anywhere near adequate action. Street meetings and canvassing indicated that workers were obviously interested in, cared about and empathised with our struggle, but on the day of the lobby, when it really counted, the active participation was lacking.

This clearly indicates the importance of building the work of the UWC. It does not, as some would tell us, indicate the futility of the struggle, and the need to simply sit back and wait. The struggle hasn't evaporated or been resolved since the great work of the National Unemployed Workers Movement of the 20s and 30s: it is still here, only the fightback has been destroyed.

The lobby showed how far away we are from building such a fight back, but it also showed the potential that has already been laid as a result of the war waged against the unemployed by the government. The recent demonstration by skilled engineers in Manchester gave us a glimpse of the beginnings of a united fight back. The weekend in Glasgow showed how demoralisation and despair were beginning to turn into anger. The demoralisation is still deep, but must be challenged by building a fighting organisation akin to the NUWM capable of raising the spirits and living standards of all workers.

The size of the UWC, at the moment, limits our work in the main to London. This is not good enough. The war against unemployment must be waged everywhere. Neither the Tories,

Labour nor the TUC, will give us what we need, we must fight for it. That fight is now urgent and demands the building of a National organisation which will unite unemployed workers in dignity and strength to fight for what we need. All workers must unite to struggle for what we need as a class and stand together against the Tory

attempts to divide and weaken us. The UWC is building now for the movement necessary by calling a National Demonstration against Unemployment on February 29 1992. This must be a demonstration which unites our class against the common enemy. Help build for the demonstration.

Only together can we win.

Roddick's Big Sleep

IN LONDON on September 9 1991, a newspaper "produced by the homeless for the benefit of the homeless" was launched. *The Big Issue*, a monthly colour tabloid, is being distributed by teams of homeless people who will keep 40p of the 50p cover cost. The remaining 10p, plus advertising revenue, will go towards "vocational training" schemes for the unemployed and homeless.

TBI was in fact founded by Gordon Roddick, chairman of the Body Shop, after he saw *Street News*, a New York equivalent which sells in the region of 150,000. The producers have plans for a 60,000 circulation, mostly in London, but with plans to go national within a few months. Its reception in government and charity circles has certainly been warm. Apparently, selling *The Big Issue* will alleviate the humiliation of begging.

All of this is charity mongering rubbish. Selling a few copies of *TBI* is hardly going to solve the problem of homelessness which even according to official figures is massive on the streets of London and other major cities. Even the publication itself is unlikely to survive beyond an initial

flush of enthusiasm. Experience from the US suggests that the public quickly becomes bored with an overpriced publication of little substance. *The Big Issue* quickly becomes the Big Sleep. Also likely to become bored are the homeless vendors themselves. The ones UWCers spoke to after the first few days reported that people were not buying in any real numbers. As one told us, "If it wasn't for the job they'd promised me at the end of it, I wouldn't be bothered..." The message that is being fed to the unemployed and homeless is that they do not need collective answers to their problems; they just need some get up and go.

Whatever the fate of this particular little 'get up and go' (and we wish it a speedy death), the UWC has warned consistently against precisely this kind of initiative. If we in the workers' movement do not move to organise the unemployed and homeless, someone else with more resources will organise them into safe and dead end schemes precisely like *The Big Issue*.

Capital crisis

THE CRISIS in London campaign has recently been launched in order to publicise the extent of the breaking up, and running down of the public services. It is mainly composed of people and unions involved in the day to day running of these public services and has an ultimate aim to unite the trade unions representing these services with a common strategy with which to fight back.

Although the campaign has many good objectives, it lacks clarity on how these are to be won.

Homelessness, NHS and Public Transport are cited as some of the areas of concern and the committee produces demands as possible remedies to these problems.

In the area of homelessness, the requisition of empty properties and their renovation, if necessary, is correctly demanded. At the same time, calls for the transport system to be put into the hands of elected committees of those who work in the industry as

well as the people who use it are also raised. Right!

The campaign states its willingness to participate in actions against sackings, helping in the recruitment to trade unions and supporting claimants actions.

All positive stuff, but the lack of clarity on how the objectives will be achieved comes across as a big problem. As we know from experience, appeals to the government (whether Labour or Tory) to carry out such reforms are doomed to failure. Lack of resources will be the excuse of all shades of government.

The Unemployed Workers Charter will be putting forward the idea of Councils of Action, composed of elected, recallable delegates drawn from people working in the services, as well as people who use them, to see that the services of London are defended and administered to the benefit of the majority of the capital's users, not for profit.

YT - Same Crap, Different Initials Part 2

IN THE LAST issue of *Unemployed Organiser*, we began a guide to the rights and benefits for young people on the revamped Youth Training (formally Youth Training Scheme).

Here, we will be looking at your rights on YT. The moment you join YT you should:

- Join the trade union in your workplace. Some trade unions offer free membership or low rates for YT trainees. Others don't, so whatever else you do...
- Get in contact with the UWC for details of our fight for a square deal for all trainees.

Equal Opportunities

All providers of YT have to "agree to promote equality of opportunity between all individuals in access to, treatment on and outcome from the training."

If your YT provider or a sub-contractor discriminates against you because of your sex, race or religion, in offering access to training or terminating training, they are breaking the law. You have the right to take the case to an industrial tribunal. There are no similar laws covering other forms of discrimination on YT. However you should not be discriminated against because of, for instance, any disability you may have or because you have been punished for breaking the law, or you are a lesbian or a gay man.

Harassment because of your race, religion, sex, disability or sexual orientation should not be acceptable on your scheme. It should be treated as a disciplinary matter.

If you are discriminated against, the TEC (Training and Enterprise Council) has to "ensure that any allegations of discrimination made against it are properly investigated and appropriate action taken". If any cases are referred to an industrial tribunal the TEC has to notify the Secretary of State immediately.

The following offer specialised help:

The Commission for Racial Equality (071 828 7022)

The Equal Opportunities Commission (061 833 92440)

Hours

Non-employed trainees must not work more than 40 hours a week on YT. This 40 hours covers your time on work experience and on "off the job" training. If the usual hours of work at your placement are less than 40 hours, you should work the same hours as everybody else.

You should not be asked to work more than 8 hours a day. You may be asked to work weekends, evenings or unusual hours, if it is essential for training purposes, but the hours have to be agreed by you. You cannot work overtime as part of YT. If you want to work more than the agreed hours of training, an employer can employ you on a casual basis, doing work outside YT.

Employed trainees may be asked to work more than 40 hours per week. Whatever hours you are expected to work should be recorded in your "written terms and conditions of employment."

For all trainees, the hours you are asked to work must comply with national legislation and any appropriate local by-laws. For instance shop assistants are entitled to meal breaks and to a weekly half-day off.

Most of the specific controls on the hours that young people can work including shift work, night work and length of hours were removed with the 1989 Employment Act. But you should not have to work excessive hours or unsuitable shift patterns likely to lead to ill health or accidents caused by tiredness. You should also have adequate breaks.

Holidays

Non-employed trainees. Until April 1991 all trainees had to be given a minimum of 19.5 days paid holiday per year (1½ days per 4 weeks of training). It is now up to TEC's to decide what paid holidays trainees in their locality are entitled to. However, if you joined YT before your TEC signed the 1991/92 TEC Operating Agreement you retain the right to 1½ days holiday per 4 weeks of training.

Your YT provider can give you more days than the minimum laid down by your local TEC and should do so where it is the practice of the sector or the industry you are being trained in. In addition, you should be given the Bank and Public Holidays, or time off in lieu if you work any of these days.

Employed Trainees. There is no legal minimum laid down for paid holidays, though current holiday levels are rarely less than 4 weeks per year.

Your written statement of terms and conditions of employment should state any entitlement to holidays, including public holidays, and holiday pay. It should state clearly the method by which your holiday entitlement is calculated so that when you leave you can calculate what holiday pay is due. Your employer should give you public holidays or time off in lieu.

To be continued in the next issue of *Unemployed Organiser*.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

THE ESTABLISHMENT has gone to great lengths over the past months to blame the rioting in some areas of the UK on the breakdown of social values. On the 8 September, *The Sunday Telegraph* had this to say on the events: "what has been going on in Newcastle and elsewhere during the past fortnight has much to do with the moral climate than with unemployment or hideous housing estates, never mind the hot Indian summer. There was unemployment in the north-east during the thirties. Men marched, but they didn't riot or burn buildings."

Interesting. See what you make from this passage taken from Wal Hannington's book *Unemployed Struggles*, which describes events concerning the National Unemployed Workers Movement attempt to hand in a petition to Parliament in protest over the 'Means Test' in October 1932:

"As the last contingent of Marchers entered the park gates, trouble broke out with the police. It started with the special constables; not being used to their task, they lost their heads, and, as the crowds swept forward on to the space where the meetings were to be held, the specials drew their truncheons in an effort to control the sea of surging

Riots - then and now



Fighting back against the state: a great working class tradition

humanity.

"This incensed the workers; they felt particularly bitter towards the specials, whom they had dubbed "blackleg cops". The workers turned on the special constables and put them to fight, but the fighting which they had been responsible for starting continued throughout the whole afternoon, whilst speakers from the

marchers were addressing huge gatherings on the green.

"The workers kept the police back from the meetings; several times mounted police charged forward, only to be repulsed by thousands of workers who tore up railings and used them as weapons and barricades for the protection of their meetings. Many mounted men were

dragged from their horses.

"From the streets the fighting extended into the park and back again into the streets, where repeated mounted police charges at full speed failed to dislodge the workers. The foot police were on several occasions surrounded by strong forces of workers, and terrific fights ensued.

"Many workers and police were

Culture corner

Pay a fifth of your dole to see a film on the unemployed by the unemployed? *Tam Burn* has a few things to say on the matter



Michael Cashman hits the big time with his pic in *UO*

ONE OF the most despicable and infuriating things about unemployment is the way you are expected to give up any hope of taking part in the activities open to the rest of the population.

I'm talking about a night out at the

pictures or at a concert or just travelling across town. I'm talking about the exclusion order placed on the unemployed and others on low incomes by the lack of concessionary prices for so many events and activities.

Recently I was flicking through the London listings magazine, *Time Out*, to see what events I would be missing that week when I spied that the film, 'Betty's Brood' was being shown as part of the London Film Festival. Great, I thought; I'd been wanting to see that for some time for three big reasons. I knew it had been made by the Gorbals Unemployed Centre's Drama Group. The Gorbals is in the heart of the Glasgow Central constituency where I am standing as Communist Party

candidate in the next election, and last but not least, it is supposed to be a really good film.

So I flicked over to the opening page on the festival to check out how much damage it was going to do my

dole cheque and found the price details, "tickets £5.50 for all films". Okay, but what about concessions? "There are no concessionary prices for the festival". I nearly hit the roof! Here is the London Film Festival excluding god knows what percentage of the people of London from seeing any of these films, never mind overdosing on celluloid like you're supposed to do at a film festival. And, most ironic of all, they are showing this film made by the unemployed for £2000, about the unemployed and intended to be shown as an inspiration to the unemployed and we can't bloody well afford to go and see it!

I got on the phone to Gorbals Unemployed Centre, who were equally annoyed and said it should be free to us. So I got on to the organisers. I was pleased to find that they immediately offered to put on an extra showing of 'Betty's Brood'. Fair enough, but what about the rest of the festival? They weren't able to come up with any reasonable excuse except that they couldn't discuss it at that time because they were preparing for the grand gala opening of the festival that night and so would ring back the next day.

So myself and a couple of other

UWC activists hot-footed it down to the venue for the gala, armed with a fresh petition sheet condemning the pricing policy of the LFF and set about getting the signatures of the dicky-bows and fur coats attending the gala. When the organiser I spoke to earlier came along, she pleaded with us to stop, saying how much they agreed with us and next year they would have concessions. We did try to get them to agree to issue a press release stating that, after discussion with the UWC, they were immediately introducing a free admission policy for the unemployed and others on low income. We didn't manage that one but did get the free showing of 'Betty's Brood', which is brilliant, by the way (sorry there is no room for a review but if any unemployed group is interested in seeing 'BB', get in touch with the UWC and we will see if we can arrange it).

The point of all this is to show how much even just ones and twos can do when you have the political weight of the UWC behind you, so get in touch now! Then get stuck into your local venues and events that ignore the unemployed! On to the mass campaign against exclusion orders on the unemployed!

JOIN UP!

Hit back with the organisation that fights against the bosses' disease of unemployment!

I want to join the UWC, so send me the details!

I want the next 5 issues of *UO* sent to me by post (cost £2)

Spread the word! Order bulk copies to sell (£1.50 for 10 copies)

Name _____ Address _____ Tel _____

Return to UWC, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. Tel: (071) 431 3135 Cheques/POs payable to UWC

MARCH

with the UWC on February 29

Please send me details of transport to the demonstration

Please send me sponsorship material for my union/Labour Party branch/other

Name _____ Address _____

Tel _____ Organisation _____